





B H1815

Hamilton

Things that Happened

227877

| BOOK NO.                                                                           | ACCESSION |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| B H1815                                                                            | 227877    |
|  |           |



SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY



3 1223 00355 4640

## DATE DUE

OCT 21 1981

SEP NOV 12 '81

DEC 1 1981

DEMCO 38-297





# THINGS THAT HAPPENED

BY

VEREKER MONTEITH HAMILTON

ILLUSTRATED WITH REPRODUCTIONS  
OF PAINTINGS BY THE AUTHOR

LONDON

EDWARD ARNOLD & CO.

1925

[*All rights reserved*]

B  
H1815  
227877

3 1223 00355 4640



## PREFACE

The incidents which form the stories in this book all happened, to the best of my recollection, exactly as they are recorded.

There is therefore no imagination or literary skill to be found in these pages, but merely a sustained effort to dig out of my memory-box certain episodes which have lain there for a long time, and to record them without conscious embellishment.

The only exception—and that a partial one—to this rule is the story of “The Passenger Who Came on Board at St. Helena.” When several men, thrown together by chance on board ship, take part in such an encounter as is here described, it is obviously difficult to give the story fully by an unaided effort of memory forty years afterwards. But aid in this case was at hand. Happily three at least of those who took part in the incident are still alive, and their aid and the study of an atlas have enabled me to fill up certain gaps in my memory and to present the story in a complete form, true in spirit if not in every detail.

With a few obvious exceptions the names of the people mentioned in the various stories are their actual names.

I have wished to avoid writing of any date more recent than 1899, and such reticence has generally been achieved, but in "The Peacock" the end of the story happened, in fact, just to overlap the century.

My first intention in writing down these memories was that they should be for the amusement of my children, but as the manuscript has grown to the size of a volume, I shall take it and, greatly daring, go in search of a publisher. A book might bring me in an honest penny—who knows? And I have enough both of the gambler and the philosopher in my nature to regard with equanimity any other fate which may await it.

À L'ÉPINE,  
ÎLE DE NOIRMOUTIER.  
*July 9, 1924.*

# CONTENTS

|                                                                | PAGE |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| I MY EARLIEST RECOLLECTION. . . . .                            | 1    |
| II HAFTON . . . . .                                            | 2    |
| III SNOW . . . . .                                             | 30   |
| IV THE CHIEF . . . . .                                         | 46   |
| V SEENGH APPU'S STREAM . . . . .                               | 52   |
| VI THE BET . . . . .                                           | 61   |
| VII TERROR IN DARKNESS . . . . .                               | 70   |
| VIII THE SLAB OF JADE . . . . .                                | 75   |
| IX MACPHAIL . . . . .                                          | 88   |
| X COINCIDENCES :                                               |      |
| The Linguist . . . . .                                         | 91   |
| The Lost Ballet-girl . . . . .                                 | 96   |
| The Prophetic Letter . . . . .                                 | 101  |
| XI LADY ROBINSON AND THE SNOOKS. . . . .                       | 109  |
| XII LINKS WITH THE PAST . . . . .                              | 115  |
| XIII THE PASSENGER WHO CAME ON BOARD AT ST.<br>HELENA. . . . . | 121  |
| XIV BUDDING ARTISTS . . . . .                                  | 153  |
| XV A LITERARY ENVOY . . . . .                                  | 186  |
| XVI SRINAGAR . . . . .                                         | 190  |
| XVII THE CHAPLAIN . . . . .                                    | 203  |
| XVIII EYE-WITNESSES :                                          |      |
| The Green Jacket . . . . .                                     | 206  |
| The Button . . . . .                                           | 210  |
| XIX SHADOW BEFORE . . . . .                                    | 221  |
| XX GHOSTS . . . . .                                            | 229  |
| XXI SENSITIVE PLANTS . . . . .                                 | 255  |
| XXII THE PEACOCK . . . . .                                     | 260  |



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

|                                                                   | <i>Facing<br/>page</i> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| STUDY FOR THE STORMING OF THE KASHMIR GATE<br>AT DELHI . . . . .  | <i>Frontispiece</i>    |
| AN AMBUSCADE . . . . .                                            | 22                     |
| EARLY MORNING PRACTICE OF THE BALLET . . . . .                    | 98                     |
| GRANDS BATTEMENTS . . . . .                                       | 172                    |
| THE SHOT AT DAYBREAK—KASHMIR . . . . .                            | 194                    |
| THE ATTACK ON THE PEIWAR KOTAL . . . . .                          | 206                    |
| LORD ROBERTS. Bronze Medallion by Lilian V.<br>Hamilton . . . . . | 218                    |
| MACPHERSON'S BRIGADE AT KANDAHAR . . . . .                        | 270                    |

## I

### MY EARLIEST RECOLLECTION

My very earliest recollection is this. My nursery was at the top of the house and above it was only the top of the great tower which was reached by a curly stone staircase. There were two windows in my nursery from which there was a fine bird's-eye view of the flower garden.

One day a miracle happened, and it was so extraordinary and puzzling that I thought about it with awe for a long time. Henriette had been washing some small white things and placed them on the sill of an open window (the one on the left) to dry. A gust of wind came and one of the white things fell, and it fell, I thought, into the garden. Then Henriette got the tongs and, leaning out of the window, picked up the white thing from the garden—at least, so I supposed.

I did not say anything about it, probably because I had not yet begun to talk.

## II

### HAFTON

I have set out to record what I can remember of things that happened a long time ago, so I must begin with my memories of infancy and early childhood however fragmentary and disconnected they may be.

I first saw light at Hafton in Argyllshire. Lawns and stretches of rough grass with here and there clumps of trees lay between the house and the Holy Loch, on the other side of which rose Benmore. There was a flower garden to the west of the house and a road through woods leading uphill to a walled garden. Walking along this road in autumn gave me especial pleasure, as large brown leaves lay thickly upon it and they were nice to walk through and to kick, and they gave forth an autumn smell.

Near the walled garden was a small pond where there were sometimes tadpoles. The presiding genius of the garden was Mr. Doig, who was an awe-inspiring personage; he was very large and terrible and took snuff. He was the arch-enemy of birds. One day he caught a mavis which had entered the net which covered the gooseberry



bushes, and he squeezed it to death in his hands, smiling pleasantly the while. I was very fond of birds, so after that I looked upon Mr. Doig as an enemy. Sometimes he led us (Henriette and Ian and me) into the hot-houses, but this was not much fun. On rare occasions we were taken up a steep staircase into a place which was full of apples and nuts and tarry string, and this was a particular joy.

In the evening I was dressed in a white frock with blue ribbons at the shoulders. I disliked having the ribbons tied and my hair brushed, and Henriette would be annoyed with me for not standing still. I suppose Ian also wore a similar costume in his early childhood, but I can only remember him in a Stewart tartan kilt and black velvet doublet with lozenge-shaped silver buttons.

We were then taken down to the drawing-room, where were Grandmamma (which word we pronounced "Gramama") and Aunt Camilla and perhaps other aunts and other ladies, also sometimes gentlemen. I wasn't so happy in the drawing-room as in other places, and was somewhat relieved when Henriette appeared to take me upstairs to the nursery, but sometimes a terrible thing happened: Henriette did not come and I had to say good night to every one and go up to the nursery alone.

The first part of this perilous journey was not so bad: a strip of carpet led from the drawing-room until it joined another strip which ran up the

middle of the hall ; on every side of the strips was a polished oak floor on which were deer and roe-buck skins, and they slipped about if walked on. There was also a niche in the wall which contained a huge two-handed sword and smaller swords and ancient weapons.

I did not mind such things a bit, but on going through an archway towards the staircase which descended into an inner hall there were two especially awful objects to be encountered. The first was a goat's head with a long beard and a sinister eye ; the second was a dummy man clothed in a voluminous cloak made of grass and a hat about two feet in width. He had been brought by Uncle Archie from South America. This creature stood in the shadows beside the staircase and there was no way of avoiding his gaze or that of the goat except by mounting the staircase, which I was not slow to do.

I still had a long way to go. There were dark passages and many stairs, and during the latter part of my journey I could not help frequently ejaculating, "Henriette !"

The last flight of stairs, which was always dark, led into a room adjoining the nursery, inhabited by MacBride, my aunts' maid, and here I was safe and had merely to run across the room and pass through the door to find myself at home.

There was another entrance or exit from the nursery which we used in the daytime ; it led directly into the circular stone staircase of the

tower. If we went down that way we got to the back part of the house, near Aunt Camilla's store-room, and not far from the kitchen and the back yard; but we sometimes went up to the top of the tower. I remember once being taken out of my bed in the middle of the night to see a comet, which seemed to cause great interest and excitement to my elders.

The kitchen was a very nice place. There was a large wooden chest there which contained oat-meal, and when the lid was open I liked to grab a fistful and consume it at my leisure. Miller, the cook, was a tyrant and had a rasping tongue. If she were in a bad humour she would shriek, "I'll tie a clout ontill ye gin ye come in here!" but when in good humour she would let me watch the joints or birds revolving on the spit.

I have seen her pick up a sheep's head and say, "Noo there's a bonny heid, for it's got a tongue that never tauld a lee!" I have always considered this remark of Miller's as an appreciation of the innocence of a sheep, but after all these years I now wonder for the first time whether there may not have been some other thought at the back of Miller's mind. A peculiarity of Miller's philosophy was that she did not believe that anything could under any conditions be ugly. Sometimes the sight of a skinned rabbit or fragments of a carcass in the larder caused me to use the word "ugly." Miller would be down on me at once. "Naething's ugly," she would cry, "Gaud made the



rabbits and the sheep's heids as weel as the roses and the geraniums, and Gaud canna' mak' ony-thing ugly." "Yes," I would say, "but Gaud didn't skin the rabbit." "Bit he made the inside o't as weel as the skin," she would reply, "and it's a' beautiful!"

The name of the shepherd was William. We always called him William Shepherd as if it were his surname. At dinner one day there was shepherd's pie—it was no doubt the first time I had seen this dish; and I remember quite clearly that I thought the dish was *made of* William Shepherd—that William had been minced up and turned into a particularly good dish. It did not greatly surprise me to find William in his usual health the next time I saw him, but still there *was* a kind of mystery about William being turned occasionally into a pie which bothered me a little now and then.

Another friend of ours was John Gordon the fisherman, who, like many of the older people, usually spoke the Gaelic. There was another fisherman called Sinclair, who was a brother of the keeper. One day Henriette informed us with tears and sad inflections in her voice that "*quand il a tiré son filet il a trouvé un homme noyé dedans.*" Sinclair always seemed after this to be enveloped in an atmosphere of tragedy and awe.

In the drawing-room stood, on a little table, the punchbowl from which I had been christened. In course of time I learnt that my mother had

died four months after my birth. Ian was three years older than I, and was born in the Island of Corfu. This gave him great prestige in my eyes.

During our childhood we only had infrequent glimpses of our father, who was serving abroad in India and other places, and did not often come home on leave. He brought with him always an atmosphere of geniality and fun. There was about him a pleasant smell of good cigars and macassar oil and whiskers.

Sometimes Doctor Gemmel came to see us. I did not like Doctor Gemmel, and I can tell the reason why: he was in the habit of producing a bottle of leeches from his pocket, and by the aid of a small glass tube a leech would be induced to fasten itself to a selected place on my body where it would suck my blood until it became large and round; Henriette then put salt on it, which made it leave off sucking and fall into a saucer where it writhed about vomiting my blood.

At other times he gave us medicine—generally Gregory's powder. Externally arnica was frequently applied to us when we suffered from contusions. Ian, I take it, shared my views on Doctor Gemmel, for when the latter vaccinated me and made me cry, Ian suddenly attacked him with a broom, displaying much courage and violence.

When I was two and a half years of age my grandfather took me out in a boat a few yards from a rocky point, but in deep water, and put me overboard. This one swimming lesson was

sufficient; from then onwards I was quite at home in the water.

My grandfather always wore a very tall black hat, a black satin neckcloth, a buff waistcoat, black frock coat and shepherd's plaid trousers. He wore this costume even when shooting coverts. In the evening he wore a dark blue coat with brass buttons and white trousers, but perhaps the latter were only worn in summer. One day I was moved to make a rhyme, and was surprised and alarmed at the hilarity which it caused. It ran thus :

*There was an old man of the West  
Who wore a buff-coloured vest . . .*

Why this simple rhyme should have caused laughter seems strange. Perhaps there was a deeper meaning in the words " West " and " buff " than the five-year-old rhymester had intended ; but, anyhow, the hilarity with which the couplet was hailed frightened me off from any further poetical efforts. But on one occasion I indulged in a quotation.

One day when Dr. Norman Macleod was lunching with us he appeared to be surprised at the speed with which I had eaten my pudding.

" What ! Gone already ? " he roared.

" Yes.

*' Like the snowflake on the river  
A moment white—then gone for ever.'*"

To this day I remember the mighty laughter of the great man,

The reason of my doing such an unusual thing as producing a quotation can be easily explained. I had often heard Urquhart, the butler, reciting "Tam o' Shanter" in the pantry, and the couplet had stuck in my head. Whether Urquhart had quoted Burns correctly is open to doubt; but whatever the poet may have written there is no doubt as to the butler's version. As a fact I was a backward little boy and very bad at learning things by heart.

Urquhart was succeeded as butler by Burgess, who remained with us for many years. The first day that he arrived he probably disapproved of Ian's behaviour at lunch, for Ian suddenly remarked, "*Qui est ce Monsieur qui secoue la tête ?*"

Our grandfather was very kind to us, but I can only recollect two or three things that he said: once, when I was walking with him in a field looking at sheep, he informed me that he remembered a man being hanged for stealing a sheep.

On another occasion we were taking a walk in Glasgow and we turned out of St. Vincent Street up a steep street, the name of which I forget, and when we came opposite to a church he stopped and pointed to the church with his stick,—"*Vereker,*" he said, "when I was a young man I shot a pheasant at that spot—there was no church there then, but there was a haystack."

One day when we were driving with our grandparents the carriage stopped at Kirn Pier. There were a few people there waiting for the steam-



boat. Suddenly a look of anger came into my grandfather's face and he said with great vehemence, "Pshaw! Look at that puppy!" We at once climbed up on the seat and looked right and left, but there was no sign of a puppy or a dog of any sort. I was puzzled about this invisible puppy. Ian told me afterwards that the puppy was "a man smoking a long cigar," but I was still puzzled.

When I was five or six years old Grandmamma and I went into the dining-room where Grandfather was finishing his lunch. "Now, Vereker," said he, "here's a riddle for you. Why is the crust of a damson tart like life?" Grandmamma shook her head and said, "No! no!" Her evident disapproval made me keen to hear the answer which my grandfather proceeded to give,—"Because it is all over dam' soon."

My grandfather was rather deaf, particularly in his left ear; so was my father. My grandfather was wont to refer to his left ear as his "Blackhall lug," and other relatives of his generation used the same expression. I did not know what it meant, but I think I had rather the impression that Blackhall was the ominous name of some disease which attacked the left ear. Then again the expression was generally spoken with a facetious intonation, which robbed it of its gloom. It was only after many years had passed that I realized that "Blackhall" had a reference to the hereditary nature of the trouble,

My grandfather's mother was Margaret Bogle, grand-daughter of Robert Bogle of Shettleston by his wife, Agnes, daughter of Sir Archibald Stewart of Blackhall. Agnes was probably dull o' the hearing, anyhow she it was who brought deafness into the family. The living generation of Stewarts know nothing about the "Blackhall lug," and I understand that the present representative of the Stewarts of Blackhall stoutly denies that any of the Stewarts were deaf; but it would be very difficult to convince me that the old people whom I heard using the expression, when I was a child, did not know what they were talking about; and it must be remembered that they had heard their parents and probably their grandparents using the same expression. Can it be imagined that any of them would have laid the blame for their dull lugs on their Stewart ancestors if there had been no reason for it?

In after years I also learnt that the lady we called "gramama" was not our real grandmother. As his second wife my grandfather had married his cousin, so that as far as blood-relationship went the old lady was my cousin twice removed. My own grandmother was Christina Cameron, daughter of Henry Monteith of Carstairs, and very shortly after the birth of my father she died. Judging by her miniature she must have been beautiful, and she was very young. Her mother was the daughter of a clansman of the Camerons of Lochiel,

Like my father before me I had a foster-mother. Her name was Margaret. She was a wild Highland lass and for many years after her first hurried installation at Hafton she used to pay us occasional visits during which she evinced a strenuous and excited affection for her foster-child.

I think it was in the year 1861 that there was enormous excitement caused by the visit of the Channel Fleet to the Firth of Clyde. It was not a fleet of ordinary wooden ships but a new kind called "ironclads," and we all went to see them. I fancy we were taken to the Fleet, which lay off Greenock, by James Lamont of Knockdow in his schooner yacht the *Ginevra*. A few years previously he had taken her round to the Black Sea during the bombardment of Sevastopol, and he had also sailed her to the Arctic, where he had shot Polar bears and walruses. The cabin was decorated with trophies of both these animals. It so happened that two of the captains in the Fleet were friends of my father; the ships they commanded were the *Royal Oak* and the *Warrior*, but there were also in the fleet the *Black Prince*, which Ian had seen launched, the *Bellerophon* and the *Minotaur*—a five-master.

I remember there was a sailor who showed us a small section of the hull, so many inches of iron and so many inches of oak. We were impressed by the thickness of the iron. The sailor was shaven on the chin and upper lip but had very large red whiskers. I also remember that stand-

ing beside the companion there was a very wizened old man, of small stature, clean-shaven and in some sort of uniform, who wore a grey pigtail. Whether he was a member of the ship's company or a visitor I do not know.

At about this date I was taken to Edinburgh to see Garibaldi. There was a great crowd and Garibaldi was in an open carriage. He stood up in the carriage, and he was a striking figure with a long fair beard and a red shirt, but I was more interested in a group of Red Indians who were standing quite near me. Their faces were painted and they wore head-dresses of long feathers.

The winter of 1861 was so cold that the Holy Loch was frozen over, and we could hear the ice breaking and crackling at the bows of ships or steamers that were passing. Extremes of temperature gave me great pleasure. When there was a hard frost it was exciting to see the fern-like shapes on the window panes, and to hear the ring of the ice on the lochan where men were curling. It was also very nice to go bathing when it was very hot and the sea was unusually calm, and you could hear the paddle strokes of the *Vivid* or the *Chancellor* quite loud, although they were a long way off, and old John Gordon would say, "I doot that means there'll be rain coming soon."

When the harvest was gathered in, the corn was threshed with flails on the floor of the barn. We used to watch this operation with peculiar fascination, and my joy was great when one of the men



constructed a small flail for me, which I prized above all my possessions.

In autumn Henriette was very fond of picking up apples and bringing them in to roast on the nursery fire. Henriette had a great store of little rhymes and curious phrases with which she was wont to enliven her conversation. They were ejaculated at random without any reference to the subject in hand. A favourite one was "*habit se coud, grain se moude*," which has an absurd sound when pronounced very rapidly. Another phrase explained the difficulty that might occur to a careless rope-maker: "*Quand un cordier cordant veut accorder sa corde pour sa corde accorder trois cordons il accorde, mais si l'un des cordons de sa corde décorde le cordier cordant fait décorde sa corde.*"

Sometimes also she recited poems of a tragic nature in a sad tone of voice which rather depressed us; but at other times she read to us *Fables de la Fontaine* or *Contes de Fées*, which we enjoyed tremendously. There was one little point, however, about the fables which troubled me for years; sometimes after reading a good fable Henriette would say "*La morale*," and then proceed to read a few more lines which were not so interesting. These words, "*La morale*," were the greatest mystery to me, and I used always to ask Henriette what they meant, and Henriette would answer, "*Eh bien, c'est la morale!*" And I would ask, "*Mais, qu'est ce que ça veut dire 'La morale'?*" and Henriette would invariably close the incident

by saying slowly and impressively, "*La morale, c'est justement la morale !*"

One of the delights of our childhood was Pod Pudding. Pod Pudding occurred when grown-up people were at breakfast. We had broken our fast long before, but we were allowed to come in and make Pod Pudding. It was made thus: a piece of toast was broken into small fragments and put in an egg-cup; hot water was then poured on the toast, which was pressed firmly down with a spoon,—the water found its way into the spoon and was discarded. At the proper moment the egg-cup was turned upside down on a saucer, shaken and removed, and there stood the Pod Pudding. It was then garnished with cream and powdered sugar (made by rubbing two lumps of sugar together) and eaten with egg-spoons.

There was only one better dish than this in the world, and that could only be achieved when there was a hard frost. Cream and strawberry jam were placed in a saucer and taken out to the lawn. When it was frozen it was brought in and devoured.

Halloween was perhaps the most important date in our year. We looked forward particularly to the making of turnip lanterns with wild excitement. Our excitement was so intense that it is a wonder that we did not start making preliminary lanterns some time before, but this did not occur to us. The selection of a good turnip was nervous work because when a pleasantly large and round one had been descried there was always the feeling

that a larger and rounder one might be somewhere near at hand. Then, again, there was the question whether roundness really was the most perfect form. There was a certain kind of long turnip that was very distinguished when properly embellished.

The hollowing out of the lantern took a long time and it was very difficult to prevent the knife from going right through the skin.

When the glorious moment arrived for fixing in the tallow candle and lighting it and then putting on the lid, which had been duly perforated, the lantern gave forth a powerful smell of tallow and scorched turnip which we thought peculiarly exquisite and exciting.

The joys of Halloween culminated in the gun-room at night when a crowd of maids and lassies and gillies and rough boys smelling of the farm ducked for apples and snatched raisins from the flaming snapdragon. It was terrible to see them so green and ghastly when the salt was thrown on the flames. When the noise and confusion were at their height a fiddler mounted the table and scraped merrily on his fiddle whilst they all danced "Duncan Davidson" or the "Reel of Tulloch."

Ladies in those days wore extremely wide crinolines, and their hair was brushed very smooth so as to cover their ears. They invariably wore white stockings, but you did not see much of the stockings because they wore also a feminine variety of white trousers edged with lace which

came down to within a few inches of the shoe.

It was so rare to see anything of a lady's leg in those days that it was hardly to be supposed that her anatomy included this sometimes graceful appendage, but this curious offshoot of prudery was, I fancy, even more prevalent in England than in Scotland. One of my uncles had married an Englishwoman, and one day when I had innocently said something about her legs, she turned to me with an air of surprise and said, "I didn't know ladies *had* legs!" I was in my turn surprised, but I did not dare to argue the point. Many years afterwards—indeed since I began writing down these memories—I mentioned this remark of an Early Victorian lady to a friend. He is a man of erudition who holds a distinguished office in the State; but he is also a man with a pretty wide practical knowledge of men and things, so it was with an amused interest that I received his confession that when he was a little boy he was under the impression that ladies did not have legs. Whether he thought their bodies continued downwards to end on the floor in a spheroid mass such as the india-rubber-like base of certain toys, or whether he imagined their feet were mechanical ornaments attached to their crinolines, I do not know, but his recollection is quite distinct that, as a boy, he considered ladies to be legless.

Many visitors came to stay at Hafton. The visitors I liked best were my father's brother-officers and friends, who were gay and much be-



whiskered. Amongst them was Captain Fitzroy Somerset, who took me pick-a-back and after rushing at an extraordinary pace about the house wound up by jumping over a sofa which had quite a high back. I think it was in '62 or '63 that Uncle and Aunt Basset came to visit us. Aunt Basset was a sister of my mother. She had married a very eccentric man called Francis Basset, who lived at Tehidy in Cornwall, where he hunted his own pack of fox-hounds. He was a very strange-looking man with long hair and a particularly curly yellow beard. He wore spectacles and used continually to say "Ta-ra-rum" in a loud sonorous voice. He used to interlard his talk with "Ta-ra-rums," and in a sentence of fifteen or twenty words he would probably say "Tar-ra-rum" or a variation of it three or four times. Apart from this he spoke with such a very English accent that I had some difficulty in understanding him. The Bassets lived in great style and Aunt Basset was one of the last persons who in London always drove about in her chariot. Her footmen, as may be surmised, wore powder both in town and in the country. They brought the chariot and the powdered footmen to Hafton. This miniature Lord Mayor's Show was quite out of place there, but it was picturesque and to me not a little awe-inspiring.<sup>1</sup> One morning early as I was roaming

<sup>1</sup> My memory has probably tricked me here. I am informed that the chariot (which I remember very clearly) never went far from London, and that the vehicle in which the Bassets came to Hafton was a travelling coach.

about the house I came across one of the footmen before he had powdered his head and I failed to recognize him. He looked just like an ordinary human man.

In the following year, when I was about eight years old, I went with Henriette on a visit to Tehidy. I remember nothing of the journey, but I remember Tehidy very well. There was a lake near the house and beautiful woods in which there were flowers that I had never seen before, and the sea was not far distant. I think I must have been a badly-behaved guest, for I got into disgrace several times. There was a French *chef* and the food was elaborate and luxurious. When I was having lunch one day with my uncle and aunt, a footman entered the room carrying a roast hare which, being underdone and quite red, obliged me to call out, "Look at the bloody hare!" I got into terrible disgrace for this. The Bassets were appalled at what they considered a vulgar expletive; but in self-defence I must say that I had never heard that popular English word used in a figurative sense, and my meaning was an innocent attempt at accurate description.

There was one thing about my relatives that disgusted and angered me. Sometimes after lunch they went into the drawing-room, taking me with them. Leaving me to look at a picture-book or otherwise fend for myself, they proceeded to sit on a sofa and cuddle and kiss and use ridiculous terms of endearment to one another. If they had done

this seriously I do not think I would have minded so much, but there was something peculiarly exasperating in Aunt Basset's plumpness and shrill voice and in Uncle Basset's curly beard and "Ta-ra-rums" mumbled between the kisses. Determined to be revenged for being subjected to this behaviour, I suddenly remembered that there were several footmen in the front hall and that it was the custom of the house, if the drawing-room bell were rung, for the door to be flung open at once and for several of the lackeys to appear with great celerity; I, therefore, selected a good moment when my relatives were in a ridiculous pose and when my movements were masked by the torrent of "Ta-ra-rums," and slipping round behind the sofa, quietly but firmly pulled the bell. The result was immediate; the door flung open in great style, disclosing a row of footmen, one of whom began to advance into the room. There was no time for disentanglement; surprise and consternation reigned—also, probably, rage and smothered laughter. In future I was not permitted to come to the drawing-room after lunch. I am quite aware that my action towards my hosts was sly and unsportsmanlike; but it is not within the scheme of these memoirs to suppress incidents in which I behaved badly.

When the hunting season began, I was mounted on a pony called Bob and had the time of my life. One day I was blooded and given the pads and the mask, which I still possess. The hunts-

man was a great friend of mine ; his name was Jack Bragg. The butler's name was Tombs, and one day he allowed me to smoke his clay pipe. I did not smoke it very long, but I smoked it until I began to feel queer.

Two or three years later on, when I was a school-boy, Uncle Basset announced that if I should enter the Church he would present me with a living. I had a very vague idea as to what a "living" was, but every one told me that this was a very exceptional thing, and it was always described to me as "the richest living in England." The idea did not attract me. I had no inclination towards the Church, and I declined the offer, which indeed seemed to me a curious one. The old people at home had put no pressure on me either as to accepting or rejecting Uncle Basset's proposal, but a cousin who was a somewhat irritable old gentleman reproached me vigorously for having declined to enter Holy Orders and thus secure the living. "You must be daft!" he exclaimed. "Just think of it! *The richest living in England!* Why, damn it all, man, if you'd accepted your uncle's offer you would have been not only comfortable in *this* world but *secure in the next!*"

To return to Hafton, I have no doubt that I must have been an unpleasantly naughty little boy. Anyhow I had the faculty for getting into scrapes which led to disgrace and punishment. My behaviour was condemned by every one except Henriette, who always stuck up for me, and was



wont to declare that Ian was really to blame for my escapades ! “ *Le grand fait la boule et le petit la roule,*” was one of her favourite expressions. This may once or twice have been the case, but usually my evil deeds arose only from my own disposition, and although I was pleased with Henriette’s attitude I sometimes had an unpleasant feeling that she was too palpably biased in my favour.

I think I must have been occasionally possessed by a demon—or how account for such an incident as this ? My father came home from India on leave about the year 1862. He was a very jolly man with a hearty laugh, and I dearly loved him ; and yet, on entering his room one day and not finding him there, I took his razors from the dressing table and threw them into a deep hole near the garden. They were eventually recovered.

I was also a rebel at heart and disliked doing all the things I ought to do, such as going “ a nice drive with Grandmamma.” “ Nice ” became to me a hateful adjective.

I particularly disliked the gloomy and silent Sabbath. We always drove, on Sunday mornings, in a large vehicle called “ the omnibus ” to the Kirk at Dunoon, where we listened to very long sermons. I detested this custom, and one Sunday when I had been dressed and Henriette’s back was turned, I escaped and concealed myself in a clump of bushes. There were shouts of “ Vereker ” ; musical shouts, conciliatory shouts, stern shouts, angry

shouts, agonized shouts, but I lay low in my bush, and the omnibus rolled away without me.

I clearly remember my mixed feelings of triumph and awe. I had succeeded in committing a terrible crime.

I then wandered in the woods and came to a rustic summer-house built against a bank from which I was able to climb down on to its roof. I saw there the bottom of a broken bottle which I picked up and threw with sufficient force to cut my thumb. I returned to the house, where Miller and MacBride bound up the cut with a tobacco leaf, but the thumb presently swelled and the doctor came and lanced it. The doctor then said, "He's a chip of the old block." This remark conveyed no meaning to me, but I felt it had something to do with a knife.

This happened a few days before the 12th of August, and it had been arranged that we were to go on the hill on that day with the ladies to have a picnic lunch with the gentlemen who had been shooting. As a punishment for my criminal behaviour I was not allowed to go.

One day Ian suggested that we should play at William Tell, to which I readily assented. He led me to a tree which grew near the tadpole pond and placed an apple on my head; he then retired several paces with his bow and arrow, took careful aim, and shot me in the left eyebrow. The arrow stuck in quite firmly.

In the year 1866 my grandfather, who had

rented Hafton from the Hunters for many years, determined to give up his tenancy. This decision was probably due to his having reached an age when grouse-shooting had lost its charm. He was born in 1794.

The end of our life at Hafton was also the end of our childhood. A month or two before I was ten years old I was packed off to school and never saw Hafton again. At this time Ian had already been at school for two or three years. We had thus got to the age when little boys were allowed to appear at table in the evening. We came in with the dessert and when the wine began to pass about and our grandfather mixed his toddy we were allowed to mix our *eau sucrée*. This was made by putting one lump of sugar into a wine-glass and pouring hot water on it until it dissolved. We probably enjoyed it as much as the old gentlemen enjoyed their vintage claret or their sherry.

When the ladies rose like a flock of seagulls to retire to the drawing-room we went with them, leaving the gentlemen to their wine. But we did not remain in complete ignorance of what was happening in the dining-room, for on our way to bed we sometimes lingered in the pantry to watch Burgess re-filling decanters, and when he opened the dining-room door, the loud hum of after-dinner talk—the political argument, the racy story, and the solemn discussion of vintages—came to our ears and gave us an idea of what went on. The days when the servants included a boy to “lowse

the neckcloths " of gentlemen who had fallen under the table had passed, but the after-dinner wine drinking was still a very formidable habit. As for the eating—it was prodigious! There may still be people inhabiting Scottish country houses who eat in the old Gargantuan way, but I doubt it. Anyhow, I do not come across them nowadays, and if they exist they must be exceptions. At the beginning of the mid-Victorian period huge dinners were the rule.

Wishing to refresh my memory on the subject of dishes, I lately paid a visit to my Aunt Camilla, whose memory of the old times is excellent, although she is now in her tenth decade. Another old lady was with her. I broached the subject by saying, " Isn't it the case that at dinner in the old Hafton days there were always four covered dishes laid at the corners of the table as well as those at the top and bottom ? " Both the old ladies simultaneously held up their hands and exclaimed in unison, "*and* the side-dishes ! " Yes, for a moment I had forgotten the side-dishes, but now I saw them clearly—substantial dishes they were, too. One might be a boiled ham and the other a couple of mighty fowls. The main dishes would be sirloin or gigot, and goose or turkey, or perhaps a haunch of venison ; but on Sundays at the head of the table was always either haggis or sheep's head. The corner-dishes—one of which was sure to be curry and rice—were tackled before the larger dishes were uncovered.



Before this, of course, there had been soup and fish. In due sequence came eight sweets. It was the custom to serve cream with all the sweets, which consequently were eaten with a spoon and not with a fork as in England.

On one occasion old Admiral O'Grady, who was my mother's maternal grand-uncle, came with his wife to stay with us. The Admiral evidently appreciated the cream, for, in the middle of the night, he woke his wife up in order to say to her, "Susan, the next time they offer you cream with calf's-foot jelly—take it!"

After the jellies and the puddings came the game when it was in season, perhaps a row of grouse which had been roasted on the spit, each bird standing on toast which was saturated with the butter which had dripped from the birds during their ample basting.

It may be thought that such a banquet had destroyed the appetites of the eaters when breakfast-time arrived next morning. Oh no! it had the contrary effect. It was a training, as it were, for the pleasant effort of coping with a Scottish breakfast; of demolishing pyramids of baps and scones and oatcakes—both farles and bannocks; of attacking the sideboard where Loch Fyne herrings and kidjeree and trout stood in the front rank awaiting onslaught, and beyond them, in reserve, pies and ham and cold birds and potted herrings.

But I have forgotten to name the very foundation of the breakfast. The great bowl of porridge,

steaming and succulent, and with it cream galore. If we had been naughty boys the previous day milk was substituted for the cream, and it made a very great difference. We often had to go without cream to our porridge.

My grandfather had planned to spend his old age quietly at Laggary, a small property on the Gareloch which comprised a rather unattractive but comfortable house and some twenty-five acres of woods and gardens, and he migrated thence in the summer of 1866, but he was not fated to be there for long. The very night that I arrived back from school for the Christmas holidays he died, so when I was taken to his room the following morning it was not to be greeted by a kindly old gentleman but to see a very still and stately figure lying on a bed which had been covered with white chrysanthemums. I was taken again to see him one night when he lay in his coffin; he seemed to have shrunk and his face looked as if it were made of wax.

He was buried in the Necropolis at Glasgow in a family burial-ground which was an enclosure against a high wall completely railed in, both at the sides and at the top. The door to this sort of iron cage was open for the occasion. The pall-bearers with the exception of my father went inside, but as the head of the grave—or lair as it was called—was at the very corner and there was no room to stand there, my father stood outside and the silken cord was handed to him through the

bars. I stood beside him and held the tassel. From where we were stationed we could look down into the grave, which was not very deep.

When the ceremony was over the wreaths, which were numerous, were carried into the enclosure. Seeing a row of sordid and evil-looking faces peering over the wall with eager expressions, I pointed them out to Burgess the butler. "Hoot aye," said he, "it's the wreaths they're efter." "But they can't get them in there," I remarked. "Oh yes, they can get them fine!" replied Burgess. "They hae a lang stick wi' a hook like a gaff at the end o't, and syne the mourners are awa' they'll howk them a' oot before ye can say 'Jock Robison'!" I felt deeply depressed. Such desecration would have been unthinkable in a country kirkyard.

This is the end of my childish recollections—but, to jump for a moment into the future, I again stood beside my grandfather's grave at the burial of his widow just twenty years afterwards. I expected to find her lair beside that of my grandfather, but I saw that it was precisely in the same place, namely in the very corner of the railed enclosure. "Well," I thought, as I approached it, "this must be a very shallow grave because they must have soon come on to my grandfather's coffin"; but to my surprise I found that it was a very deep grave—about twice as deep as the one in which my grandfather had been buried. The earth had been thrown in a great heap in the enclo-

sure. I casually observed a skull on this mound, but it struck me as a natural object in such a place. Cruikshank, whose drawings I knew very well, frequently depicted graveyards when illustrating the works of Fielding and Dickens, and he always introduced skulls lying about, so a graveyard without a visible skull would have appeared to me incomplete.

When the ceremony was ended I sought out the grave-digger and asked him whether he had not struck on a coffin during his digging. "Na, na," he replied, "there wis nae caufin—naething ava', forbye a few auld banes." At that moment my Uncle Harry came towards us. He was the minister at Hamilton and a Doctor of Divinity. He was a very witty man and had a great sense of humour. On this occasion his face was serious and wore rather a wild expression. He drew me aside and said in a half-whisper, "I have just seen my father's skull." His voice shook with emotion as he pronounced the word "father." "My dear Uncle Harry," said I, "this place is full of skulls. That was just an old skull and might have been anybody's." "No!" he replied with great emphasis, "it was NOT 'anybody's skull.' It was my father's. I recognized him."



### III

#### SNOW

At the time that my brother passed his examination for the army the War Office had just conceived the idea of permitting cadets to choose whether they would pass through the usual course at Sandhurst or go abroad for a year to study certain specified subjects. My brother elected to go to Germany.

My father, about this time, learned that a distinguished General, who had commanded the Hanoverians in their successful fight against the Prussians at Langensalza in 1866, was living in exile at Dresden.

The upshot of this information was that my brother some weeks later found himself studying German and military tactics under the guidance of General Dammers.

Ian's experiences at Dresden were deemed so satisfactory that a few years later I followed in his footsteps and arrived at General Dammers' little house in the Radeberger Strasse one fine day in the spring of 1873.

On the same day and almost at the same moment and with the same object there also arrived at the

house an old Harrow boy, Reginald Huth by name. He was two or three years my senior.

General Dammers was a well-set-up man with a distinguished bearing. I should guess his age to have been not far short of sixty. His ancestors were of Danish origin, but for certainly two or three generations they had been settled in Hanover. His father had fought at Waterloo in Halkett's Brigade.<sup>1</sup>

The General was a man of unusual ability, intelligence and learning; he was also of a sympathetic and benevolent nature, which made him a delightful mentor.

When Hanover was annexed by the Prussians he followed the ex-King to Austria, and at the date of which I write he remained a Personal Aide-de-Camp to the ex-King, who was then living at Gmunden, to which fragment of a court the General was occasionally summoned.

When the Franco-Prussian War was on the eve of being provoked Von Moltke offered him a very high command, which of course he refused with scorn.

It is easy to understand how the philosophic mind of this benevolent man was filled with an intense hatred of the Prussians. Devoted to the House of Hanover, he had seen his blind King robbed and driven into exile, his Queen insulted and his country administered by a caste whom he personally detested and despised.

<sup>1</sup> Colonel Hew Halkett commanded the 3rd Hanoverian Brigade, which was attached to the 2nd British Division.

We youngsters became imbued with this detestation of the Prussians. Although we knew no Prussians personally, we sometimes met them in public places, where their swaggering and affected manner did not tend to modify our sentiments. As for the Hanoverians, we were certainly to some extent in sympathy with them, but I, at any rate, had too much Highland blood in my veins ever to forget that one of the titles of the King of Hanover was Duke of Cumberland.

The General's wife was English. She belonged to a Dorsetshire family, but had lived in Hanover so long that she no longer spoke her native tongue with fluency. On the other hand, when speaking German, she introduced many anglicisms. There was much charm about this little woman. She was imbued with vivacity and her kindness to us youngsters was unfailing.

Some time before we came to Dresden the Dammers had been staying in a town through which the Kaiser was to pass, and the citizens were ordered to decorate their houses. As the rooms the Dammers occupied were on the line of the royal progress the General went away for the day; but Mrs. Dammers stayed at home and, shortly before the procession appeared, hung from her window two curtains striped in the yellow and white colours of Hanover.

When the Kaiser's carriage appeared she stood at the open window above her temporized bunting and gazed at the Kaiser with a stony stare.

She was a handsome little lady with an aquiline nose and cold blue eyes, and I have no doubt that the hatred expressed in her glance must have been impressive, even at a range of thirty yards.

With the Kaiser were his son, the Crown Prince, and his grandson, "the horrid boy" as Mrs. Dammers used to call him when employing mild language.

The two former did not appear to notice her demonstration, but "the horrid boy" saw it and looked up with an expression of great anger. "The horrid boy" in time became the Kaiser Wilhelm.

For us the English Quarter in the Altstadt was supposed to be out-of-bounds, and so our acquaintances were all ex-Hanoverian or Saxon officers, with many of whom we became intimate and on the best of terms, sharing occasionally in their revels. In spite of their friendliness they could not always conceal their feelings toward the British. We were not yet forgiven for our non-intervention on behalf of Denmark and of Hanover in '66. Many of these officers had recently fought in the Franco-German War, and sometimes they could not resist saying, "Your turn next!" They had complete faith in the power of the German machine, and every man of them was cocksure that Great Britain and her Colonies would one day fall an easy prey to the German legions. The Germans have some good points amongst their national characteristics, but they are a jealous race and cannot bear



playing second fiddle, whatever the tune may be.

I remember a typical instance of their mentality. A year or two after the date of which I am writing, Huth and I were in Florence. There was a garden there where stood a statue of some British-Indian Rajah or man of position (I forget his race or rank), who had died in Florence. Whilst we were looking at it two Germans came up—young men of the ex-student type, for their fat faces were decorated with scars—and one of them explained to the other that the three lettered panels on the base of the pedestal were inscribed, one in Italian, one in English, and the third in Oriental characters, presumably the native language of the individual on the pedestal. In a disappointed tone his companion inquired, “*Auch Deutsch nicht?*” The question struck us as so comical that we were instantly convulsed with laughter. The Germans looked at us with fury, and no doubt thoughts of calling us out passed through their minds. “*Auch Deutsch nicht!*” became for us a catchword.

It is not my purpose to tell of our life in Dresden, of our studies, or of our amusements. I shall merely state that though the General’s methods of teaching German sometimes produced in us a state of exasperation bordering on imbecility, on the whole we had an extremely pleasant time of it and the days passed quickly enough.

Towards the end of the summer Reginald Huth and I left Dresden for a walking tour in Upper Austria.

Late one night, and very tired, we arrived at Ischl, and we slept so well at a good inn that we did not sit down to breakfast next morning until after ten.

At breakfast we discussed our plans for the day and consulted our map; it was on a small scale and did not give the elevations. As it was so late we decided on a short walk, namely to Aussee. The line to take was very simple on the map; a road, which we could see from the bow window where we were breakfasting, ran beside the river; this we had to follow for a few miles until we came opposite to a stream which debouched into the river at right-angles; we would then wade the river and ascend the left bank of the stream for a couple of miles or so, when we would be near its source and close to a watershed from which we could probably see Aussee, but at any rate whether we could see it or not Aussee would be down hill on the other side of the ridge and only five or six miles on in the direction we were going; it seemed to be quite clear that the walk could be accomplished in four or five hours.

At a table not far from us there was an elderly individual, very gaunt and lean, whom we judged to be an American; he now joined in our talk, declaring that our proposed way of getting to Aussee was a bad way, that it was very doubtful if it was possible to get to Aussee at all that way, and that anyhow we were making too late a start. We, of course, being young, foolish, and vigorous,

disregarded his warning, and were soon striding along by the river.

We each carried a knapsack with a rolled-up plaid strapped to it; we were wearing light summer clothes with ordinary trousers, and heavy shooting boots. It was a very hot day, and we took off our coats. The stream we were looking for on the other side of the river soon came into view; it flowed down a steep gorge, the upper part of which was lost in a forest of spruce; the hillside which was visible was remarkably steep.

When we were nearly opposite the mouth of the stream, we waded across the river, climbed the hillside and entered the spruce wood, keeping as near the stream as possible, as its course was our guide to the point where we wished to cross the main ridge.

We climbed energetically for a long time and felt we had got to a high elevation, but it was difficult work because the ravine in which we were was steep and in places precipitous. Fir trees grew wherever they could find soil for their roots, and sometimes we found ourselves at the base of a tree and close beside or beneath us the top of another tree rooted in a ledge far below. In such a precipitous gorge it was impossible to keep anywhere near the stream, so we were obliged to work uphill to the right; but even here it soon became so steep that we had difficulty in getting forward, and could only do so along what was practically a narrow ledge.

We were by now 400 or 500 feet above the bed of the stream. Presently we were brought to a halt ; the ledge ended, and for some twelve feet or so there was an almost perpendicular face of rock down which water was trickling. There were a few tufts of grass in line with the ledge to give some foothold at the start, and just half-way across there was a patch of grass about a foot square, but it did not look reliable. To a mountaineer the place would have presented no difficulty, especially as on the other side and lower down was a hazel bush with some stout branches, but we were novices at climbing, and would have felt more confidence if the face had been a yard narrower. We rolled our trousers up above our knees to have our legs more free. As I was the lighter weight I went first. Face touching the wall, I got to the square bit of turf, which was shaky, then, using a fissure for my fingers, crossed and got into the hazel bush.

Reginald then started and got as far as the square of turf, which at once began to give way under his weight. As the turf crumpled, some small stones which had supported it were dislodged and rattled down the face until they sprung into the void and eventually boomed into the bed of the stream. Instead of at once shoving across the few feet that remained, Reginald, to my amazement, clinging to the rock with both hands, burst into a violent fit of laughter. The remainder of the turf at once shot into the abyss and Reginald



came near to following it, but managed to grasp some of the branches of the hazel, which I pushed in his direction.

His laughter, it appears, was caused by the noise of the descending stones, which he thought must be his brushes falling out of his knapsack.

On his way from the rock face to the bush one of his legs received a deep cut which bled copiously. When his leg was bandaged, and he had had a pull at the small flask of brandy which I carried, we discussed the situation, and decided that we had better climb to the right out of the gorge and continue our course on the mountain side in the same direction as before.

The climb at first was difficult, but gradually became easier and the air noticeably cooler. Soon, rather to our surprise I think, we came to a sprinkling of snow, and a short time afterwards, when we emerged from the forest into a more open country, the snow lay everywhere, but it was not deep, and the going was good. There was no breeze, and, now that we had left the gorge behind us, no sound. Since we had crossed the river in the morning we had seen no living thing, but now occurred two glimpses of life.

A roebuck passed lazily in front of us and took the direction of the gorge. Soon afterwards we came to a small valley where there was a log hut, evidently one of the huts used by the Sennerinnen when the cattle are driven to the high mountain valleys in summer time. Outside the hut in the

snow was a haglike old crone with a black kerchief tied round her head ; she was stooping near a large pot or cauldron, and when we attempted to hold conversation with her she muttered in an unpleasant fashion, and altogether impressed us unfavourably. "Come on," said Reginald, "she is cursing us. For Heaven's sake come on!" So on we went.

Up to this point my memory of our climb and of the sequence of incidents is quite clear, but now I must confess to an almost total forgetfulness of what happened, or of what was the appearance of the country for the next few hours. I remember that the only food we had with us was a box of sardines which we ate, but where or when I forget. The only incidents I remember were that the snow became deeper, and that our hands were so numb with cold that we could not unbuckle the straps that fastened the plaids to our knapsacks. I also remember that where our trousers were rolled above our knees they had frozen into rings of ice, which we either could not, or did not think it worth while to unroll.

My memory begins again at the point when we reached the top of a high shoulder or ridge, which we hoped would enable us to look down on Aussee. It was indeed the highest point of the watershed, and we had an extended view of snow-covered mountains before us, but no sign of Aussee or any human habitation. The reason was clear: a wild gorge lay before us, rising abruptly to another ridge which was high enough to block out the view

beyond. From the lie of the land it seemed probable that the ridge now visible was the last we should have to cross.

The sun had just set when we started to slide down into the valley. So far the snow had been easy, but now the going became worse every moment, for the snow was of a varying depth owing to the boulders and fragments of rock which filled the bottom of the valley. There was a hard crust on the surface of the snow on which we could walk with ease as long as it did not break, but unfortunately every few paces it gave way and we broke through sometimes knee-deep, and sometimes up to our waists or armpits. Reginald, who was a big, heavy fellow and also handicapped by his injured leg, broke through continually, and although he discarded his knapsack, it was no good,—he kept on crashing through the crust. When we were somewhere about the middle of the valley he announced that he was done, that he could not go another yard, and that he was going to stay where he lay. Argument was of no avail, he was evidently exhausted, and neither able nor willing to continue another step. The only thing to do now was to go on over the ridge and try to get help, so, following Reginald's example, I dropped my knapsack in the snow and started for the ridge.

It was dark by now; there was no moon, but it was a clear, starry night and intensely cold. If the going had been good it would not have taken

long to get to the ridge, but now the crust gave way so often that it was a pleasant surprise when it upheld me for a couple of steps. As I began to ascend the slope the going became worse than ever. Under the snow lay the debris of the ridge, great fragments piled occasionally one on the other, and I often fell and became wedged between the fragments, and unwedging myself was difficult and exhausting.

The best part of an hour had passed since leaving Reginald, before I approached the small saddle on the ridge which it was my aim to reach. It was a mere fifty yards or so ahead, when a curious thing happened: all desire to go on suddenly left me, I felt tired to the last degree, and unable to go forward a step. I had reached a flat square of snow about the size of a large bed, and into this I dropped on my back, sinking well into it. I remember that there came to me a distinct feeling of satisfaction that the walk was at an end, and it was with pleasure that I looked up at the stars, which were very bright and scintillating. It was freezing hard, but that did not inconvenience me.

This sudden collapse was strange, as we had only been walking or climbing for about twelve hours and I was accustomed to running and walking long distances without ever feeling very tired; but I fancy the high elevation we had reached, and the continuity of the climbing with no interval of rest, had suddenly had its effect, and once that I had yielded to the temptation of lying down on that



square of snow my muscles refused to make another effort.

I can have had no expectation of surviving the night, for I remember that my mind was occupied with calculating how long it would probably be before our bodies should be found, and until the news should reach General Dammers and eventually our people at home.

I lay there for some time and then it came to me forcibly that it was ridiculous to lie there within a few yards of my goal without making another effort to get to it, so up I got and, probably refreshed by the rest, soon clambered up to the saddle of the ridge, to see below me, and not a hundred paces off, a light. As I hurried down towards it I saw that it came from a log hut, one of a group of two or three similar huts, which told black against the snow.

As I drew near the light was extinguished. Passing round to the door, which was at the other end, I knocked and asked for admittance, but there was no response. I then called out that my companion was in the snow and asked for help to bring him in. There was no answer and no sound.

It was maddening to think that I had got to within a yard of salvation and could go no further.

I scanned the hut to see if it were possible to break my way in, but it was built of solid logs and the door was firmly barred. I continued to shout my woes with increased vehemence and, at last, a voice on the other side of the door answered

me and, after more talk and many entreaties on my part, the owner of the voice unbarred the door and opened it.

Before me stood a girl of about my own age; she was dark and wore a black kerchief tied round her head. On the earth floor behind her were the embers of a fire which still glowed. The hut was divided lengthways by a partition and behind this partition I heard the munching of cattle.

Now, it has been my set intention in jotting down reminiscences of things that happened many years ago to write down only what is clearly in my memory. I doubtless could write down the remaining incidents of this night as a connected narrative with a fair degree of accuracy, but that is not my intention.

In my memory the incidents of the night are few and isolated. There was a torch. Reginald when found was asleep. When we re-entered the hut the Sennerin discreetly disappeared. We piled a great deal of wood and logs on the fire, which was in the middle of the floor. We searched for food and Reginald found something which he tasted and said must be cattle food, but we then found an earthenware jar which contained pears, which were either dried, or partially preserved in syrup, but in any case they were very good. We then lay down one on each side of the fire.

When we were awakened by the Sennerin at daybreak, it was discovered that one of Reginald's

boots was scorched and the sole so charred that it fell off; he had also managed to burn his tie. I was hardly more fortunate, as I had burnt quite a large hole in the seat of my trousers, and completely burnt my handkerchief.

When we emerged from the hut a sight of extraordinary beauty lay before us. Less than a hundred feet below us lay the margin of a smooth and level sea of mist which stretched for many miles to the horizon in front of us and on either hand. The snow-covered tops of mountains broke through this sea in many places, and had all the appearances of islands. The sun was just rising above the mist and the eastern slopes of the islands were illuminated with every shade of orange, whilst the shadows in the ravines were of the most exquisite tint of blue and purple. The scene was so resplendent and different to anything we had ever seen before that it gave us the impression of being in another world.

Having not without difficulty persuaded the Sennerin to accept some money for her help and hospitality, and having improvised a bandage for Reginald's soleless boot, we said good-bye to our hostess and sped towards the mist. As we neared it, the echoes of the mountain were awakened by a tremendous sound, and looking back we saw the sturdy girl on a pinnacle of rock blowing us farewell through a long curved horn.

Before long we left the snow behind us and found ourselves in the forest. The ground on

which we walked was green and mossy and our steps made no sound; the trees had an ethereal appearance, being enveloped in thin mist; no direct sunlight reached us, but the atmosphere was brilliant, and the forest was of a beauty that seemed to us unnatural. The otherworld feeling became stronger than ever, and Reginald gravely asked me if I was *quite* sure I was alive. I forget what answer I made, but I remember that Reginald appeared to think it probable that he had died in the snow the previous night and was now treading the Elysian Fields.

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*

That day, in perfect summer weather, we arrived at a picturesque inn, the walls of which were covered with vines from which hung bunches of purple grapes.



## IV

### THE CHIEF

Cousin George was a very extraordinary man. He was short and extremely stout; his hair, I think, had once been red, but as far back as I can remember he was quite bald and his voluminous cheeks were decorated by thin flat whiskers brushed towards his nose. His large face generally bore a ferocious expression, but, though a man of quick temper and amazingly strong antipathies, he was at bottom of a kind and genial nature and the fierce expression often gave way to a very expansive smile. He always wore old-fashioned high collars which nearly came up to his ears.

He had been for many years in India; he had been there at the time of the Mutiny and for I do not know how many years before. He had a great admiration for all that appertained to Calcutta and the eastern side of India, and a huge contempt for Bombay and the western.

He was always alluded to as "The Chief." No doubt the title had been bestowed upon him by some wag with serio-comic intention, but, all the same, he *was* the lineal representative in the male line of an ancient Scottish family and he was proud of the fact.

The Chief had three soldier nephews: Willie Middleton—generally known as “Bay”—and his brother Jack, in the 12th Lancers and 1st Royals respectively, and Colin Donald who, at the date I write of, had just joined the 7th Fusiliers. They were a cheery trio.

The Chief was very fond of all his nephews, but Bay’s practical jokes and irrepressible high spirits sometimes came near to driving the old man mad with rage. The Chief’s rage, which terrified a great many people, had no effect on Bay, who would dash at him and poke him with one finger in the middle of his large and bulging shirt-front and shriek, “Why do you wear such disgraceful shirts, Uncle George?” This counter-attack always restored the Chief to good humour.

There were two subjects in which the Chief was alarmingly proficient—one was geography; you couldn’t mention a town, river, mountain, peninsula or island on the face of the globe but he would tell you at once where it was and probably a good deal about it.

His other subject was the British Army. As a matter of course he knew both the number and territorial name of every regiment and also any additional title or nickname conferred on it, but he also knew the genesis of the regiment, and if it had previously borne another number or name he knew *that*, and could give it to you without a moment’s hesitation. He not only possessed this unusual store of information about the Army, but

he expected every one else to possess it, especially soldiers young or old. If a soldier should admit his ignorance of the fact that, let us say, the 7th Hussars had once been Light Dragoons, he would cry :

“God bless my soul, man ! Don’t you know that Hussars are quite a modern thing in the British Army ! The 7th Queen’s Own Hussars were formed in 1807 out of the Queen’s Own Light Dragoons —*and they had only been Light Dragoons since 1783*—before that they were Heavy Dragoons ! ”

Or, if some one asserted that the 72nd had always been the 72nd he would shout :

“No such thing ! They were raised by Seaforth in 1778 and were called Seaforth’s Highlanders, and when they got a number it was the 78th, and they were the 78th till 1786, when their number was changed to the 72nd ; and I can tell you this, too, it was in the year 1824 that they became the Duke of Albany’s Own ! ”

Now in addition to this general knowledge of regimental history, he had a particular knowledge of the names and rank of many of the officers in each regiment. If he heard of the death of any officer he promptly entered a very black D in his *Army List* after the officer’s name, and in similar fashion made the necessary alteration if he read in the *Gazette* of any officer’s promotion.

He spent a great deal of time in his smoking-room and invariably smoked Manila cheroots.

When Ian had passed for the Army I was still

at Wellington intending to follow his example; but during the year 1872 my father told me that he thought it was a mistake for us all to be in the same profession, and showed a very strong desire that I should strike out in a different line. I was rather taken aback at first, but on thinking it over agreed to do anything that entailed an out-of-door life. Several projects were examined and discussed, and finally it was decided that I should go to Ceylon and plant coffee.

I left Wellington at Easter 1873 and went to the Continent for nearly three years to study languages and travel about, returning however to Scotland for some part of the shooting season in '74 and '75.

My berth having been taken on the P. & O. steamship *Surat*, I left home one day in December 1875. My father's last words were: "Don't forget to call on the Chief to say good-bye—or you will be in his bad books for ever!"

There was not much time to spare, but still there was just time, so, telling old John Munroe the coachman to drive fast, we turned up the Chief's little avenue and I soon found myself in the smoking-room. The Chief did me the honour on this occasion of getting up out of his arm-chair and warmly greeting me. His voice trembled with emotion as he said, "And so you are off to the East! Lucky beggar!" (The Chief pronounced all his consonants very clearly and emphatically.)

"Yes, Cousin George—just off—just time to say good-bye!"



“ Well, good-bye, my dear boy, and God bless you ! Now look here : you’ll land at Point de Galle, and go ashore in a catamaran, and you’ll stay the night at Galle, at least you probably will—no ! you’ll *certainly* have to stay the night at Galle ! ”

“ Good ! ” I broke in, for I was getting rather anxious about my train, “ I’ll make a point of staying there ! Well, good-bye, Cousin George ! ”

“ But wait a bit, man ! There’s something I want to tell you. The distance from Point de Galle to Colombo is  $72\frac{1}{2}$  miles, and next morning at six o’clock you’ll start in the coach and you’ll stop for tiffin at Bentotte. Now at Bentotte they’ll offer you oysters—they are *much* larger than our oysters and very good too, but if I were you I wouldn’t have any—they’re *not safe*. ”

“ All right, Cousin George ! I’ll remember that—good-bye ! ”

“ And yet they are famous oysters,” continued the Chief ; “ you might have one or two—a couple—not more—just a couple ! ”

“ All right ! ” I cried, making for the door and striding down the passage, “ I’ll have a couple—good-bye ! good-bye ! ” But the Chief hung on to me down the passage and brought me to a standstill in the hall.

“ No,” he roared, “ it’s best to be on the safe side. Don’t have any ! Remember that—when you get to Bentotte *don’t have any oysters !* ”

I tore myself from him, and shouting, “ All right, Cousin George, I won’t touch them ! ” jumped into

the carriage; but we had not gone fifty yards when John began to pull up, and at the same time I heard vaguely a sound of shouting. Putting my head out of the window I was amazed to see the Chief running after us. When he saw me he bel-  
lowed :

“ You might have *one* ! ”

A month afterwards everything happened as he had foretold : the coach *did* stop at Bentotte for tiffin, and there *were* oysters—I remember the look of them—enormous oysters. But, to be honest, I can't for the life of me remember whether I ate one or not.

## V

### SEENGH APPU'S STREAM

The western end of the Haputale District lies on the southern slope of a long mountainous ridge, some 6,000 feet in height, but at the march of the Needwood and Haldumulla Estates there is a gap where at an elevation of 5,400 feet the track leads to Beauvais, the only estate on the northern side of the ridge. Beyond Beauvais is the wide stretch of the Borlanda plains.

When I could get a few days leave it was with great joy that I made my way to Beauvais to stay with Eddie Moss. He had inherited the estate from his father, and lived there with his young brother Lewis, surrounded by his shikharis, trackers, dogs and hounds. Life there was a continual round of shooting and hunting. Perhaps our favourite sport was to go up to the Ohiya Valley and camp. The boys and trackers would be sent on in advance to make rough shelters of branches thatched with lemon grass, and in the cool of the evening we would follow with the dogs and dog boys. At daybreak came the hunt. The sambhur was our quarry, but there were also many little red deer there, and more than a chance of finding pig or leopard.

At the proper season we had excellent snipe shooting in the swamps and the few paddy fields on the edge of the plains, and there were four or five days in each year when numbers of green pigeons came to eat the berries of a certain tree which grew in the little strips of jungle on the northern slope of the Haputale ridge. These pigeons were large and elegant, and their flight was remarkably swift.

It happened once that I passed through Beauvais on my way to Newera Eliya ; I was riding one of the best horses I ever owned, a bay Waler. He was as clever in rough ground as a hill pony, and could stay for ever. My intention was to get to Wilson's Bungalow that night.

Soon after leaving Beauvais there is a river to ford ; it is a fairly good stream which comes down from the Ohiya Valley and is called the Ohiya Oya. Once across this stream the country is generally flat with a few small isolated native villages and paddy fields, then the plain.

The last village before reaching the plain consisted of a few native houses. The headman of the village was one Seengh Appu, a veteran shikhari, with keen eyes and a thin white beard. He was a jolly old sportsman and a devoted friend to our hunting parties. A couple of hundred yards from his house there was a tiny stream, a mere trickle of water. The riding track sloped down from Seengh Appu's house to a bridge formed of a single tree, perhaps forty feet in length, and lashed



to it were several upright posts and a hand-rail. For a horseman this bridge was of course useless. so when we reached this point we turned off the track to the left down a steep bank to cross just above the bridge. The bed of the stream was nearly dry, the water a few inches in depth and a few feet in width, but what struck me as curious was the low level of the channel, which above us was grooved through the slopes of the mountains, as if cut with a titanic gouge. The bed was so deeply scoured that it passed some twenty feet or more beneath the log which served as a bridge; after that it widened out and disappeared into a swamp.

On regaining the track the ground was fairly level for some seventy or eighty yards and then rose in a gentle slope to the actual plain. Just where the track began to rise there was a post and a rough fence—probably marking the limit of Seengh Appu's territory. After this the plain stretches for miles to the north, unbroken by a single tree or a single human habitation, until the next river is crossed. This is much wider than the Ohiya Oya and at the ford is more than a hundred yards in width; beyond it appear once more tracks and villages, and soon the great cart-road which leads to Wilson's Bungalow and to Newera Eliya.

I have forgotten why I went to Newera Eliya or how long I stayed there, but I remember very well arriving rather late one Saturday afternoon at Wilson's Bungalow on my return journey. For

some hours it had been raining heavily and as I rode up to the rest-house the rain was coming down in torrents. My horsekeeper, Rhâman, who had a miraculous way of meeting me at the end of ever so long a stage, was on this occasion missing, so I gave my horse a rub down and a feed and soon afterwards found myself in a bleak room, eating an inferior curry under the eye—the evil eye, I felt assured—of the melancholy rest-house boy.

It had been my intention to stay the night at Wilson's Bungalow, but now an uncontrollable desire possessed me to push on to Beauvais. It was only twelve miles from Wilson's Bungalow and I judged that there would be about two hours of daylight in which to do it. In such weather it was no doubt rather late in the day to make a start, but I was possessed with the idea, and once the big river was crossed there was good going on the plain, and my horse was in tip-top condition. If it came to the worst and the Ohiya Oya was impassable, I could always put up for the night with Seengh Appu. But one thing was evident, there was no time to be lost.

I paid the boy and rushed to the stable, saddled my horse and rode towards the river. As I approached the ford an aged Sinhalee ran out from his verandah and cried out, "Master cannot pass the river! The flood is great!"

Reining up, I shouted, "I can go to the river and see!"

“No, master,” he cried, “it is a very bad time. If master should cross the river he would be drowned in the swamps!”

Though impressed by the old man’s words and manner, the thought of returning to Wilson’s Bungalow was insupportable and I pressed on to the river. A good volume of water was coming down, but it seemed fordable, so in we went. In a few yards the water was up to the Waler’s girths, but we were soon half-way across with little change in the depth. As we approached the other shore, however, the water rose, and the force of the current increased. The Waler struggled on gamely, but was beginning to miss his footing, and every moment I expected we should have to swim for it. Ten yards more—five yards—a flounder—a gallant recovery, and we were on the bank.

We had not got far across the plain when the failing light gave warning that the day was closing and that Seengh Appu’s house was as far as we could get before darkness set in. On we went, galloping where the ground was good, and all the time the rain came down in sheets and the darkness grew.

A danger, not before thought of, now presented itself. The plain was so featureless and one of its rolling swells so like another, that on crossing it on former occasions I had been guided unerringly by the rugged contour of the mountains which formed my objective; in such rain and with the darkness increasing every moment there was no

guiding background visible ; any deviation from the right direction would certainly lead us sooner or later into one of the many swamps in the centre of the plateau. All my thoughts were therefore concentrated on direction and on nursing my horse whilst maintaining as high a rate of speed as was practicable. I galloped on, pleased to think that Seengh Appu's bridge had been built so high above his stream.

At last a happy moment arrived. Suddenly Seengh Appu's post and fence loomed up through the mirk a few yards ahead. I checked the Waler as we passed the post and we slithered down the sloping track, and then instinctively stopped abruptly.

An amazing thing had happened ; we had pulled up in the shallow margin of what appeared to be a vast lake. The gloom of the evening and the myriads of raindrops that lashed the surface of the water made it impossible to see far, but as far as could be seen in front and to either hand there was water. Not a sign of the bridge or of the village, nothing but water and the pelting rain. We might have been standing on the shore of a limitless ocean.

I remember that my first emotion was one of extreme surprise, and next a desire to see if the bridge still stood ; so taking my horse up the slope, and hitching the reins round the post, and putting my watch and spurs and so forth into the saddle-bag, I hurried off towards the bridge.

The water for perhaps twenty or thirty paces

did not rise much above my knees, but gradually it crept up to my waist, and then encircled my ribs. I calculated that I must be within twenty yards of the bridge, but there was no sign of it. And then it struck me what a fool I was to *expect* to see it ! The bridge was on rather lower ground than where I stood, so if it still existed it must be under water—far under water ; even the hand-rail, if it had not been carried away, must be a foot—two feet—perhaps three feet under water. And then when I thought of the vast volume of water that must have rushed down the ravine I became convinced that the log must have been swept away, however firmly its ends were riveted to the ground.

I returned to my horse, feeling baffled and miserable. To try to recross the plain was unthinkable, and anyhow useless ; for no horse or man could now hope to swim the big river. There seemed to be only one thing to do and that was to wait there through the night, and so we waited.

The darkness was now complete, the rain still fell in torrents, the night air grew colder, I was chilled to the bone, my teeth chattered, fits of shivering set in which became continuous, and what vitality remained to me was rapidly oozing away. How long I waited I do not know, but at last I got to that state of body and mind when inaction became insupportable and I had to adopt the only possible alternative, which was to abandon my horse and swim for it ; so loosening the Waler's



girths and giving him a farewell slap on the shoulder I walked into the water.

My direct course was due south, but to surmount the current I walked for as long as I could in a south-westerly direction. There was no current and the ground was pretty flat, so I had advanced some way before the water reached my armpits. A few more strides and I gave the ground a last kick and struck out, keeping well upstream.

It seemed to be an easier swim than I expected. and after a little time I fancied I must be more than half-way across.

Just as I was congratulating myself on my progress and looking out for the farther shore a swirling stream swept down on me. Swimming with frantic energy to pass the centre of the current only brought me into worse water ; tumbling waves and eddies burst over me, and I had the distinct feeling that I was a mere cork to be carried where the stream determined ; still, striking out towards the south-west and conscious of being carried with great rapidity to the east, I all at once received a violent blow on my left hip from some hard object which my hands grasped instinctively. It was below the surface of the water and seemed to be moving up stream with irresistible force. I was bewildered, and for some moments could not understand what this unseen object could be, and then I realized that it was the hand-rail of Seengh Appu's bridge. To cling to this was no easy matter, as it was about a foot below the surface and a

great weight of water beat continually on my head and shoulders, but holding on as best I could, I slowly managed to work my way along the rail, blessing the man who had built the bridge so strong, until at last the swirl of the current became less violent.

When I reached the end of the rail the rush of the current had been passed and there was only a slow movement in the water. Making a last spurt I soon had the joy of touching bottom and wading out of Seengh Appu's river. As I shambled up to the village the rain stopped with a suddenness which suggested magic, and the air was filled with the roar of the streams coursing down the mountain sides.

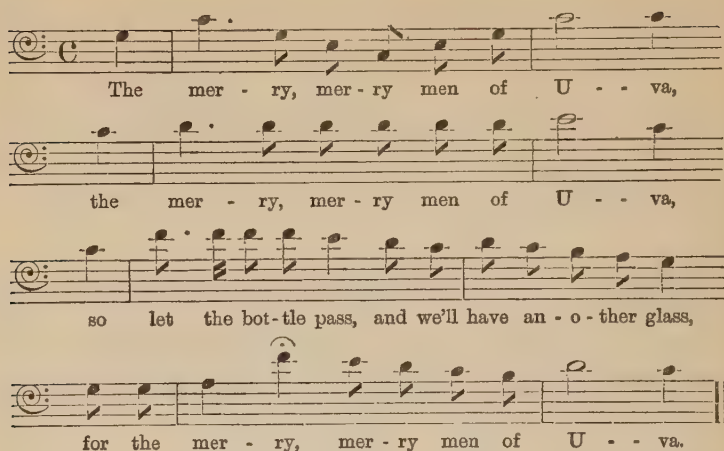
I was received with the utmost hospitality by Seengh Appu and his household. His fair daughters were bidden to pull off my wet clothes, which they did with dexterity and thoroughness. Hot coffee with jaggery was prepared, and then the old man advised me to rest, as nothing could be done about the horse for *four hours*. Having slept for that space of time I was roused to find Seengh Appu's five sons waiting for me at the door. One of them carried a torch. When we got to the stream the log was just clear of the water. The Waler was standing at the post. Unsaddling him and fixing a rope to his headstall, we had no difficulty in getting him to swim the narrow stream.

## VI

### THE BET

I do not know if the habits of the modern tea planters resemble those of the old coffee planters, but I expect they are more sedate. In our District there was a terrible amount of drinking and gambling—fortunately not continuous, or there soon would have been no planters left. For weeks or months at a time the great majority of the planters led exemplary lives on their estates, working much and drinking little, but occasionally there would occur what was called a Planters' Meeting.

These meetings were always held on a Saturday, and the ostensible reason for them was the fixing of the price of rice to be issued to the coolies, and other general estate policy, but in fact the principal business transacted was the uncorking of bottles, and the consumption of the contents, varied with cow-boy tricks in the saddle, or impromptu hurdle races on an absurd little bit of ground not quite so steep as the surrounding country. The wild spirits spent the night in playing cards and billiards, and they drank B and S, and they sometimes sang, "*The merry, merry men of Uva*," which was a very good song and our own particular one.



The meeting of the Haputale District took place at Haldumulla. Apart from the native bazaars which lined the cart-road, the village of Haldumulla consisted of a court-house, a rest-house, a bank, and Glenny's large bungalow and store. Near the store was the billiard room, with a long row of stables conveniently situated behind it. There was no other store in the District, so the amount of business Glenny did was very large, as he not only supplied us with all our luxuries and most of our necessities, but also dealt in machinery, tools, rice and all sorts of things which were required in bulk for the estates.

Glenny was a man of quite good education and address. He was very fat and heavy and jovial. He had a short beard and would have required very little making-up to represent King Henry VIII. He also had a cork leg on which he lunched about laboriously.

Glenny on ordinary occasions left the running of the retail part of the store to his native clerks, but when the planters began to arrive for a meeting he was always to be found in that part of the store which contained a bar, and there he would lavishly stand drinks—generally champagne—to his old friends or to young greenhorns who were reputed to have good balances at the bank. A dice-box always stood on the counter in the store and Glenny was always ready to throw dice for anything—not only drinks, but any article in the store.

Glenny was an inveterate gambler, of unbounded courage and with an extraordinary knack of throwing sixes at the right moment. I would not dream of suggesting, ever so faintly, that Glenny didn't throw fair—if there had been any such suspicion, he would not have enjoyed, as he did, the reputation of being quite straight. No, I believe Glenny's frequent successes with the dice-box were due to practice and confidence.

The way the store goods were purchased by ordeal of the dice-box was thus: A planter of a gambling turn of mind would come in and say, "Glenny, I want a case of *three star*."

"Right! Will you have it put down to the account or throw for it?"

"Come on! We'll throw for it!" Then the dice-box was rattled, and if the planter won, the case was rushed out by native boys and placed on the floor beside him; if Glenny won, it was



placed on Glenny's side of the floor. Now if Glenny won, obviously the planter was still without his *three star*, and would either have to buy it in the ordinary way, or throw for it again; being a gambler he would throw for it until he won it, and he would then back his luck and throw for tins of sardines, or bottled ale, or cartridges, or wire netting, or anything else he happened to want. The heaps of goods on each side of the floor grew in dimensions until the planter decided to stop the game, then the articles in his heap became his property and were considered as paid for, and those in Glenny's heap remained in store but were charged to the planter's account. Glenny's heap was generally more valuable than the planter's. I don't think Glenny appeared often at the card table, but he was a deadly hand at billiards, and particularly at pool and pyramids, which were the games usually played at Haldumulla.

Another type of gambler in our District was a certain Count Komorovski, who was one of the coolest and neatest men I ever saw. He was always ready to bet on any subject, and to any amount. Although quite a young fellow he had, I believe, been a member of the Paris Jockey Club. He was as different in appearance from Glenny as he well could be. He was fairly tall and slight but extraordinarily strong and as hard as nails.

Komorovski once made a little bet in which I became, unwittingly, involved. It happened thus.

One Sunday morning I went over to Beauvais by appointment to shoot snipe with Eddie Moss in the afternoon, and Moss informed me on my arrival that he had made a bet with Komorovski that we would get fifty couple. Now fifty couple would have been a very small bag to get at any of the famous low-country snipe grounds, such as Bibbulé, but at Beauvais it was very different: there were only a few paddy fields of not very great extent, and they were some way off on the edge of the Borlanda Plain. It seemed to me that they would take some getting.

On the other hand, Moss was always extremely well posted as to game, also he wasn't at all given to betting and it was unlikely that he would make a bet on any subject connected with shooting unless he had more than an even chance of winning it.

Moss was a quite remarkable shot, very quick and accurate. The up-country snipe in Ceylon are good strong birds, generally rather wild, but they had a poor chance if they rose anywhere within range of his choke-bore. He was not so good a shot with a rifle at a mark or at standing game, as he had a nervous twitch of the head which always came on if he were making an aimed shot, but if the game—whatever it might be—deer or leopard—was running, he used his rifle as if it were a gun with deadly effect. He was a good gunsmith and made his backsights to suit his style of shooting.

I was rather an indifferent shot unless I was shooting regularly, when I sometimes managed to get my eye in, but at the date I speak of I had been shooting more with the rifle than the gun and was quite out of practice as far as snipe shooting was concerned.

After tiffin I tried my best to get Moss to make a start, but he only said, "Oh! there's lots of time. Old Seengh Appu came up last night and reports that his fields are full of snipe. Don't worry, we have lots of time!"

Even when the horses were at last saddled and brought round, Moss wasn't ready; he found he had to talk to a Kangany, or give physic to a dog, or do something else that was quite unnecessary, and so the minutes slipped away; the result was that when we arrived on our snipe ground a good hour that might easily have been spent in shooting had been wasted.

The first field we shot was a long narrow field in terraces. There were numbers of snipe which were rising very far out. I shot badly; Moss shot extremely well. When we had finished the field, the bag for the time we had been shooting was satisfactory in regard to the bet. We then got into some larger, flatter fields where my shooting took a turn for the better, and when we made our next halt the bag was well ahead of time.

Before long we were elated to know that we had secured half the bag—twenty-five couple—

and the birds seemed to be as plentiful as ever, and the bag steadily increased—thirty couple—thirty-five couple—forty couple—all was well! The bet was practically won! Komorovski was squashed! We called a halt for refreshments.

At Beauvais, and indeed on the other side of the ridge as well, we always drank cold tea with milk in it when shooting, and after trudging through the miry paddy fields it was very pleasant to sit under a tree and drink a deep draught of it, and smoke a Badulla cheroot, and laugh at Komorovski's under-estimation of our snipe ground.

When we started after our rest we found the snipe had suddenly grown rather scarce, and it took a lot of walking to get the next five couple. It was certainly rather annoying of the snipe to behave in this way, but there was still a good deal of ground to go over, and ample time to get the birds, so we were quite happy, and hurried on to the most likely places.

In Ceylon it is difficult to find any kind of game in the heat of the day, nor does the shikhari ever attempt to do so. The very early morning when the dew is on the grass is the best time; but the cool of the evening, which we had now attained, is also a good moment, so we tramped through the likely places at first with expectancy, but with a growing amazement—the snipe were not at home. Where were they? Ten minutes passed—twenty minutes—and not a bird to be seen. There was a feeling in the air that daylight would soon be

coming to an end—only a very short time left in which it would be possible to shoot—we were running it too fine—why the devil hadn't Moss started an hour sooner?

With the fading light our prospect of winning the bet was growing dark; I waded through the paddy gloomily; and then suddenly all was well again—from Moss's side of the field came a number of shots in quick succession, at the same time two or three birds rose in front of me and were accounted for before they corkscrewed. Moss had wasted no cartridges and the bag was now forty-nine couple. One couple wanted—that was all, but the light had gone, *it was too dark to shoot.*

We were almost at the end of the field when a wisp of birds got up at the very corner. I fired automatically in their direction; one of the boys ran forward and with a shout of joy picked up a bird the like of which I had never seen before. It was a painted snipe. Painted or unpainted, a snipe is a snipe— $49\frac{1}{2}$  couple—*one bird wanted*—and darkness was upon us; not the gradual deepening of the twilight as in Europe, but the sudden descent of a Ceylon night, when natural forms become mysterious shapes standing silently in the balmy air, and the only lights are those of the fireflies making here and there some tree into a pyramid of stars, and all around arises the tremulous chorus of the tropical night. There was nothing more to be done. We mounted our horses and made our way towards Beauvais.



The ninety-nine birds in the bag gave us no joy, for our thoughts were with the one bird wanted—the little bird sitting somewhere in the wilderness of paddy fields.

## VII

### TERROR IN DARKNESS

There was an estate called Ettrick some miles to the west of the Haputale District ; it was in an isolated position on the steep side of a mountain. In 1879 the solitary Durai who managed the estate fell ill and had to be taken down to Colombo. I was asked to take his place, and did so.

The bungalow was situated in the middle of the "coffee"—to use the word we employed to describe the plantation—and above it towered the rugged jungle-clad peaks of the mountain.

Stewart Fasson came over from Dickoya to stay with me. His bedroom was at one end of the bungalow and mine at the other ; between us was the dining-room. In front of the rooms was a wide verandah which ran the whole length of the bungalow.

One night when I had just got into bed, and blown out my candle, the voice of Fasson shouting came to my ears, so jumping out of bed, without stopping to put shoes or slippers on my feet, I ran along the verandah and entered my guest's room. He was standing some six feet from one of the windows with a lighted candle in his left hand,

and was pointing to the turkey-red curtain with his right. My eyes followed his indication, and came to rest on what I at first thought was the paw of the red monkey which the Tamils call Coorunghé.

There were many of these monkeys in the jungle, and they were very fond of coming into the edge of the coffee and eating the berries, but I had never seen one anywhere near the bungalow, and it was surprising to think that one had concealed himself in Fasson's window curtain. Two or three fingers covered with reddish brown hair grasping the edge of the curtain were clearly visible in the candle light.

"What on earth is it?" asked Fasson.

"It is more like a Coorunghé's paw than anything else," I suggested.

"Of course it can't be a Coorunghé," said Fasson. "Let's call the boys—they'll know."

So we shouted for the boys, who soon appeared; but at the sight of the hairy fingers they drew back in great alarm crying, "Oh, that is a very bad poochie, Durai! If he bites a man, man will die in great pain!"

I was a good deal impressed with the evident fear they had of the "poochie," knowing the contempt with which they treated scorpions, and the calmness with which they were wont to tackle cobras and other poisonous snakes. As they backed to the door I said, "All right. Get out!" They at once obeyed the order and retired.

"It's a tarantula," said Fasson.

"Yes," I said, "it's a tarantula."

"How are we to get at him up there?" asked my guest.

"The thing is quite simple," I replied. "We must get him to come down."

There was very little furniture in the room, the bed in a corner opposite the door, an almirah and some chairs against the wall, one chair in the middle of the room, and a small table near one of the windows looking on to the verandah. I moved the small table to where Fasson had been standing and placed the candle on it so that the bottom of the curtain and the floor near by were illuminated. Arming myself with a long hunting-knife, and approaching to within a yard or so from the bottom of the curtain, I suggested to Fasson that he should gently shake it.

In anticipation, the matter in hand seemed very simple; the tarantula would crawl down the curtain and when it reached the floor would be transfixd by the point of the hunting-knife.

Now this was the first time that either of us had seen a tarantula, and we were completely ignorant of its habits, or of the pace at which it could move.

Fasson raised his arm and I stood ready with the knife to transfix the brute as soon as he arrived at the floor.

When Fasson shook the curtain the tarantula at once sprinted down to the floor with incredible velocity. We both jumped back instinctively. In

doing so I upset the table and out went the candle. So here we were with bare feet, in total darkness, and with a disgusting poochie (whose bite causes *death with great pain*) running about the floor.

I shudder even now when I think of the mental anguish of the next few moments. Sheer terror such as I had never before experienced possessed me as I groped about in the darkness, painfully conscious of my bare feet and diaphanous pyjamas, and expecting every instant to encounter the hairy legs and poisonous fangs of the creature which had inspired our usually stolid boys with such horror.

I have awaited the charge of an elephant—a screaming tusker who meant business; and I have sat in the torture-chair of a dentist awaiting his preparation for the scrunch and haul; and I have been awakened at midnight by the hoarse vindictive howl of what I firmly believed to be a ghost—a howl uttered apparently *within the canopy* of the ancient four-posted bed in which I lay—the while a flickering fire revealed that no visible thing was there. True, it was no ghost—a rising wind, an old weathervane and a cavity in the wall behind the panelling had combined to produce the unearthly sound—but *at the time* I thought it *was*, and no ordinary ghost, but one of unwonted power and malignity.

On all those occasions my feelings were calm and pleasant compared to what they were now in the blackness of this room at Ettrick. A feeling of suffocation came with the thought of the rapid



stealth of movement, the silence, and, above all, the hairiness of the brute so near us in the dark.

In stumbling back I came in contact with the chair, on to which island of comparative safety I mounted ; but even now my abject terror continued and, kneeling on the seat, I feverishly scraped each of the legs in turn with the knife, in case the repulsive poochie should be climbing up to attack me ; and all the time rang in my ears the terrible sentence, " If he bites a man, man will die in great pain."

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

The terror had thus reached its culminating point, and I should prefer to leave myself *en l'air*, as it were—an abject symbol of Fear crouching on a chair—but it would ill become me to disappoint any earnest searcher after truth, such a one as should ask, " But did the brute escape ? " No, madam ! He did not escape. When light was restored, and we had marked down our quarry under my guest's bed, we rapidly arranged a plan of attack, which this time did not go a-gley. When the tarantula next broke cover he quickly found himself transfixed on the point of the dagger and so—to slightly alter Dr. Goldsmith's lines :

*The man recovered from his fright,  
The brute it was that died.*

## VIII

### THE SLAB OF JADE

Once, whilst in Ceylon, I had to leave the estate to look after itself for some weeks to take ship to Madras and go thence to the Nilgherries, where I wished to gain certain information. Whilst in the Nilgherries I received a letter inviting me to stay on my return journey with Major and Mrs. Richardson at an Artillery Station near Madras. Mrs. Richardson I had known some years before in Scotland, when we were both in our teens. I had heard that she had married Major Richardson, but I had never met him.

I accepted the invitation, and in due time spent a delightful week or ten days with them. They lived in a bungalow surrounded by a large compound in which there were very fine trees. Beyond the compound was the Maidan: a vast plain intersected by dry nullahs. The only visible vegetation on the Maidan were the clumps of cactus scattered over its surface as far as the eye could reach. In the early mornings we went for long gallops over this plain. Richardson had very good horses, and he mounted me on a four-year-old Waler which he had just bought. It was a pleasure to

ride this horse, which had a nice action and a good turn of speed. After I had departed he wrote saying that he had named the horse "Vereker," which I took as a pleasing compliment.

Major Richardson was in command of two Batteries of R.H.A. and was as efficient a Commandant as could be found anywhere. He had seen a great deal of service, and was a determined, resourceful, blunt, original sort of man. Something of a martinet, but with a saving sense of humour. In appearance he was of medium height, his shoulders were broad and his face, which was lined and weather-beaten, was garnished with large red whiskers and moustache. He had been in several adventurous expeditions beyond the Indian frontier, and was one of the very few men who had been through Burma. He had even penetrated into the Palace at Mandalay, and was one of the few Englishmen who at that date had done so. This Palace was built on an island in a lake.

One evening he told us of the things he had seen there, but there is only one that remains in my memory.

In passing from one of the larger rooms to enter another he had to traverse a corridor. Half-way along the corridor there was an opening or window, and below the window, on looking out of it, he saw that the wall was lapped by the waters of the lake. In front of the window, and not more than a yard or two from it, stood a marvellously fashioned table, and the top of it was made of one solid slab of jade.

It was no ordinary jade, but jade of the most exquisite colour, and the edge of it was wrought with a Chinese design. Richardson was aware of some of the history of this slab. He knew that it was coveted by the Emperor of China, who had offered the King of Burma two hundred thousand for it—not dollars or rupees, *bien entendu*, but pounds sterling, or their equivalent. This sum, however, was not sufficient to tempt the Burmese, who clung to their treasure.

“And now,” said the Major, “do you know what will happen some day? There will be a war. And if the Burmese are defeated and Mandalay is entered by the invaders, it is an absolute certainty to my mind that this will happen: some Court official, or priest, or some one or other in the Palace, will, at the last moment when the place is being stormed, fling that slab of jade through the window into the lake. I am convinced that that will happen. To me it is impossible that it should not happen. You mark my words and remember!”

Seven years after Richardson had made this remark there was war with Burma; the invaders entered Mandalay, and among the invaders was my brother, and when the city fell he was actually quartered in this very Palace.

I remembered about the slab of jade, of course, but somehow I could not write to him about it. Whether it was that I felt he would take no steps towards searching for the slab, or whether I felt

a letter would bring a disturbing influence into his scheme of work, or whether I was merely too lazy to explain the matter with pen and ink, I do not know; the fact remains that I took no step to inform him.

And what was the end of the story? Was Major Richardson right, and *was* it flung into the lake? And did the man who flung it live to fish it out again? And if so, what has been its adventures, and *where is it now?*

At times when in a mood for day dreams I used to exercise my brain by searching for the answer to these questions. And first I thought of the Chinese, for there were Chinamen in Mandalay even during Thibaw's bloody reign. Was it not probable that they who knew its value so well would quickly get in touch with those who held the treasure? And once in touch was it likely that they would easily be shaken off? In my mind's eye I saw the secret conclave; the long-drawn-out haggle and its inevitable outcome. Then the unobtrusive start for the East in that dark hour before the false dawn; the pack-bullocks and the well-armed escort, but the arms not too apparent; the inconspicuous scouts on front and flanks; the skirting of a hundred paddy-fields where high above them the egrets glance in the sunlight; the twisting through the endless strips of uncultivated jungle in a silence broken but rarely by the flap of the great pigeon or the whirl of the peacock-pheasant; the bivouac and the blazing log fire



throwing a ring of light on the forest trees ; the start again at daybreak—ever towards the East until the deep waters of the Salween are crossed and left far behind ; and then the higher ranges of forest-clad hills where the only roads are elephant tracks or the paths of the opium-coolies. Now and again the scouts strike some small clearing of terraced hill rice or poppy, but they turn stealthily away from such signs of human habitation, and plunge again into the thick jungle where the high trees are covered with bright orchids, and the thickly-growing bamboo fills every hollow, and there is a heavy smell of rotting wood and noxious jungle weed. On, over roaring mountain torrents and through rocky chasms where the only sign of man is the cave temple with its interminable images of the Buddha. At last ! Before them lie the broad waters of the Mekhong, but they do not call it so, it is as Chiulung Kiang that they hail it when it comes to view, for is it not their frontier ? But their journey is only just begun. From Mandalay to where they have crossed the Mekhong is a mere three hundred miles. They have still many weeks of travel to accomplish before they can reach the big river and, gliding ever eastwards, approach their destination.

There is a vast flat plain intersected with many waterways, and in it lies a city girdled on every side with high grey walls, and within the city is a high steep-contoured hill which dominates the surrounding country, and near the base of the

hill, but on ground high enough to let its roof be seen from beyond the city wall, is the winter palace of a noted Mandarin. The palace is famous far and near for the wealth and treasures it contains, and *there* it was that I first pictured the destination of the slab.

\* \* \* \* \*

An idle dream! My hypothesis was false. The man who did the flinging had other thoughts than to blab out his secret to a Chinaman. Not East nor North, but South and West was the destined voyage of the slab.

I see another vision. A cargo-boat sails lazily down the Irrawaddy. On board her squats a passenger, lately a High Official at the King's Court, but now, to use a Burmese expression, an "eater of repose." His baggage we cannot see, for it has been safely stowed, but one of its items is large and flat and wrapped in gunny-bags and matting. He is on his way to Rangoon, where he has a business matter of great moment to carry through. Presently he has reached the town and is installed in the house of his brother-in-law, the owner of the big rice mill. And every day he seeks out merchants and traders, and sometimes they come to see him and his merchandise—that which was lately wrapped in gunny-bags—but the weeks roll by and no business has been done. He does not seem to mind. Life is very pleasant there, and his temperament is philosophic. Sure of the value of his goods he murmurs to himself the Bur-

mese equivalent of "*Ne rien perdre pour attendre.*"

One day an unusual kind of visitor appears; he has lately voyaged from Shanghai to Singapore, where he has transhipped for Calcutta, and it is by a mere chance that he finds himself at Rangoon for half a day—it was not in his itinerary. The visitor is a little man with acquisitively formed finger-tips, full lips, large nostrils and wide eyes; they have an oily-looking surface and are expressionless, but they wander rapidly and there are few objects that escape their glance. He may do business with our friend, for is he not the emissary of Rosenboom, the greatest of all Art dealers? And are not jade and porcelain his specialities?

When his eye falls on the slab a tired look comes into his face and he gives an indifferent shrug of the shoulder, but within an hour he has cancelled his passage to Calcutta and a cable message is flying to London. Rosenboom's method in business is to buy only the best and not to stick at the price. No hitch arises. I do not know what price is paid, but the great green slab passes from the Burman to the Jew.

And now comes Maung Tao, the wood-carver, to measure the slab, for its new owner wishes to protect it with a very substantial teak-wood casing. The top and sides are to be thick and solid and made to fit tightly over the jade which has been encased in felt. Beneath it a single piece of teak will be cunningly morticed to the sides. And it is the Jew's fancy to have the whole elaborately

carved in Maung Tao's most ornate style. The work progresses, for Maung Tao is to be well paid, and he is given free rein in choosing his design. The top he proceeds to decorate with portraits of the *Thirty-seven Nats*. Each *Nat* is surrounded with convolutions of hkaya leaves, which form a border to the panels; peacocks also appear at intervals among the leaves. In the centre is the dominating figure of Thagya Min—though King of the *Nats* he, unlike them, has never been a mortal, so Maung Tao surrounds him with rays of glory and other celestial attributes. On the under part of the casing are depicted with horrid realism the torments of the various Hells, the whole enclosed in a rich border of flames and serpents. This fine specimen of Burmese wood-carving, which you would swear was cut from one solid block, is then wrapped in matting and placed in a wooden box.

When next a coasting steamer calls, the box and the Jew leave the shores of Burma. Their first destination is Calcutta; a pause and then they are at sea again—this time on board a P. & O. and bound for England. There is no mishap—the voyage is accomplished—they have reached London—the box has been opened—the carved wood-work has been disembowelled and Mr. Rosenboom is looking at the viscera.

Mr. Rosenboom has the mysterious faculty of being able to find the man—sometimes the only man—with whom to place a costly work of art. And this time, as often before, he has found the

man. Perhaps it was an easy find, for he was one of the most famous of the great collectors. An old man and a rich man with a big house stuffed with treasures—for he has collected for over forty years and has sternly eschewed the second-best.

The slab has been placed in the Chinese room—so called because in it are many objects from the Far East—but the Great Collector takes no account of origin or period; his taste is universal, and many things—some of them incongruous to a fastidious—have strayed into this dazzling room. The quiet tone of the jade is apt to escape the eye of the visitor, surrounded as it is by cabinets of gleaming crystal and porcelain. Here shine figures of demi-gods that might be cut from huge diamonds, so bright are they, and there Ming wine-jars and beakers show their exquisite turquoise blue. And a great screen uprears itself and on it a design of fruit-filled baskets, each fruit an inlaid gem. And rivals to attract the eye, a Ju-i sceptre, or a T'ang monster, or the golden mask of an Egyptian queen, or the carved and gilded figure where Pilon's hand is evident, or Houdin's stately marble, or some gorgeous splash of colour from Spain or Persia or a Pharaoh's tomb, but in spite of all this rarity the owner has fallen under the spell of the mysterious jade. He regards it as his chief treasure.

The years roll on and the Great Collector has grown very old. One winter's day the cold grips him as it never gripped him before. He is indisposed—he has cancelled his engagements—his doc-



tor has brought a famous specialist to see him—he is a shade better—he has passed a fairly good night—he is just the same—he has had a relapse—his condition is grave—he is dead.

And the executors are now discussing the fate of the collection. They do not take long to decide. It must go to the famous auction-rooms of Messrs. Shovabid Winkattam and Nudge. To Shovabid's in the springtime, when the thoughts of old collectors lightly turn to *objets d'art*.

And the day comes, a brilliant day in early June; and the news has spread, and the town is agog to see the "notable collection." From half-past twelve to one New Bond Street is filled with an eager throng; from the North and from the South they come to be engulfed by the Shovabidian portal, and in the big room what a crush! Collectors and their satellites, dealers both Jew and Gentile, of familiar aspect here, but sparse to-day in the jostling crowd. Society and Art are here in force. There is Lord Crumbeltower wondering if there will be such a company next month when his ancestral tapestries come up for sale, and here is Bosh, the eminent Art critic, and beautiful Lady Runymead; and Mrs. Lymely-Lyte, and Mrs. Climer too, and those veritable *fleurs des pois*, Freddy Bluegore and George Topping. And here is Glum who writes those funny verses in *Punch*, and Lyttlewig the new K.C., and Colonel Dabble who has just run up from the War Office, and Sir Albert Newrich—whose deplorable brother still

calls him Bert—and with him his daughter Lady Cawtim, resplendent in the latest creation of Monsieur Machin. And there, reminding one of old days, goes Henry Squire; time was when he would bid as stubbornly as anyone for a lot that took his fancy, but those days are gone—what use is a fine rent roll when outgoings and taxes mount to nineteen shillings and ninepence halfpenny in the pound? And bless my soul, here comes that renowned warrior Brigadier-General Itt, V.C., *mais qu'allait-il faire dans cette galère?* Ah! I see, he is escorting the alluring Mrs. Brasstopper. And here are our friends the painters, Madder Brown and Vandyk Slacker—of course. Slacker has just given Brown a glorious idea for a comic illustration, and with gleaming eye Brown is making a note of it on his shirt-cuff. And look! Sir Pepys Kweek, the celebrated portrait painter, and just behind him, Tunginchiek the famous sculptor. And now appear the familiar features of Sir Macklin MacGarrick the great actor, and his pretty wife. Just observe Sir Macklin's courtly bow as he apologizes to the Duke of Everhunting for treading on his toes. Such a bow obviously puts the Duke in the wrong. Why doesn't he take greater care where he puts his toes? And here are some notabilities who have made long journeys to be present. Mr. Croesus P. Greenback, the multimillionaire, and his friend Colonel Dryman, and the old Comte de la Taupinière-Monticule, and Monsieur Lirlatoile, the great expert from the

Louvre, and many more whose names it would be tedious to relate.

Rare lots appear and their appearance unsluices a steady flow of bids—some audible, some silent—not only silent, but invisible to any eyes but those above the rostrum. Now and again a slight wave of excitement seems to rustle through the crowd when the bidding has soared above its expectations, but it soon subsides, for the public knows it must reserve its feelings for the great moment of the sale. At last it comes. A strangely placid voice announces, “Lot 23. A Slab of Jade. Its edges decorated with the eight emblems of Happy Augury.”

\* \* \* \* \*

No, no! It won't do! This like the other is an idle dream. It was *not* so. Again I have followed a false scent. The slab did not come to Europe. If it had, more than one man *must* have known about it. No! Its hiding-place is neither in China nor in Europe. I see a third vision, which is, I think, this time the true one.

The slab was thrown just as Major Richardson predicted it would be thrown. The man who threw it then escaped by boat, intending to gain the right bank of the river; but the river was at that moment suddenly lashed by the guns of our flotilla, which in a few minutes sank every visible craft. A shell from *Kathleen* or *Irrawaddy* caught the fugitive and he perished, and his secret with him.

As for the slab of jade, it remains just where it fell, and even now, as I write these words, I believe it still reposes embedded in the mud at the bottom of the Palace Lake.

## IX

### MACPHAIL

We all looked upon Archibald Macphail as a very old man. He was the Father of the District, and it was rumoured that thirty-five years had elapsed since he first came to the island. He was a big burly West Highlander, born in my own native country of Argyll, and was a man of no education, but of strong character. He was hospitable with a true Highland hospitality and, though somewhat morose and taciturn, we regarded him with affection. One of his peculiarities was that although he always appeared to enjoy listening to an anecdote, he invariably missed the point when he attempted to relate it himself.

One Saturday night North Davidson and Eddy Moss had come over to my little bungalow on Ginnegádulla to hunt with me on the Sunday, but Macphail insisted that we should come and dine with him at Needwood.

We were uproariously gay at dinner, and our gaiety was intensified when our host suddenly asked us if we had ever heard the story of Atherton and the Prince. "No!" we all cried, kicking



each other under the table. "No! We never heard that one—do tell us!"

Now the story of Atherton and the Prince was a chestnut known doubtless to every planter in the island. As a preface to it let me mention the fact that in Ceylon "tuskers" are exceedingly rare. No cow elephant has tusks, and probably not one bull in a hundred.

Atherton was in the "Forests" and was famous as a big-game shot, and more famous for the daring way in which he drew the long bow. When the Prince of Wales (afterwards King Edward) came to the island it was arranged that he should see wild elephants driven into a corral. In case of accidents two noted shots were told off to be in close attendance on him. Atherton was one, and I fancy Jack Tyndall was the other. When Atherton was introduced to the Prince, "Mr. Atherton," said His Royal Highness perhaps with a little malice, "I hear you are a great shot. How many elephants have you killed?"

"A hundred, sir," replied Atherton.

"Indeed!" cried the Prince, "and of these how many were tuskers?"

"All of them, sir," said Atherton.

Such was the story. It was considered a funny story by those planters who knew Atherton, and who occasionally went a-hunting elephants.

When Macphail started on his recital of the story he could not speak coherently for some time owing

to the violent merriment with which he was consumed, but at last he began :

“ Well, boys, you know that Atherton is a tremenjous hand at drawing the long bow. My certies ! There’s no one in all Uva can beat him at that—or on the Kandy side eether ! Ha ! Ha ! Ha ! He ! He ! He ! Pass the bottle, Davidson ! Fill your glasses, boys ! This stuff won’t do you any harm—there’s not a headache in a hogshead of it ! Well, down at the Corral when Sir William<sup>1</sup> brought Atherton up to the Prince and introduced him, the very first question the Prince asks him is how many elephants he had shot ; and Atherton—Ha ! Ha !—Atherton draws himself up—you know his way—He ! He ! He ! Oh dear ! Oh dear !—He draws himself up—and—and—mentions *some larrge numberr*. (Shouts of laughter from the company.) And then the Prince asks him how many of them were tuskers—and what do you think of Atherton’s cheek ? He draws himself up—Ha ! Ha ! Ha ! Ho ! Ho ! Ho !—He draws himself up—and—and—again mentions *some larrge numberr* ! ”

<sup>1</sup> Sir William Gregory, Governor of Ceylon.

## X

### COINCIDENCES

- (1) THE LINGUIST
- (2) THE LOST BALLET-GIRL
- (3) THE PROPHETIC LETTER

Coincidences that are curious from their improbability have always interested me, and the nearer they approach some absurd incident in a crude work of fiction the more interesting they become.

An instance of such a coincidence occurred once to my old friend Bill Furse—now a General and a K.C.B.

From Woolwich he went to a Field Battery, and after two years spent in the West of England got his jacket in 1889. The Battery of Horse Artillery to which he was gazetted was in India, so Bill made his preparations for departure and paid a round of P.P.C. visits to the kind folk in Gloucestershire whose hospitality he had enjoyed. Amongst them was an old lady who, as she bade him good-bye, added, “and if you meet my nephew in India, please give him my love.”

“Yes, certainly,” said Bill. “In what part of India is he?”

“Oh! I haven’t an idea!”

“And what is his Regiment?”

“Oh! don’t ask me!”

“Well, but anyhow you must give me his name.”

“Yes, I must do that! His name is Captain Herbert.”

“Good,” said Bill. “I shall do my best to deliver your message, but India is rather a large place, I understand, and it may be difficult to find him.”

Bill went to India and learned that his Battery was on the march. He joined it and, after marching for three weeks, they arrived at their new quarters in Lucknow.

Next day his Captain said to him, “Now, the first thing we have to do is to call on all the Regiments stationed here. This is the list, and the first Regiment we shall call on is the 17th Lancers. We, being a Horse Battery, shall probably see a good deal of them during the next few months.”

When they got to the Lancers’ Mess-room it appeared at first glance to be deserted, but, as they advanced into the room in search of the visitors’ book in which to inscribe their names, they descried a somewhat somnolent figure in one of the arm-chairs. Disturbed by their footsteps the figure moved, regarded them sleepily for a moment and then, realizing that they were strangers, sprang up and came forward to meet them.

Explanation and conversation ensued, and within two minutes Bill had given the Lancer his aunt’s love.

## THE LINGUIST

I can recall a very peculiar coincidence in which I was involved.

When I was at Naples in 1875 I at first stayed for some weeks *en pension*. Amongst my fellow-boarders, who represented half a dozen nationalities, was an elderly Russian who was a very nice old boy. He was a remarkable linguist. Every day I had opportunities of hearing him converse in Italian, French, Dutch, German, and English. This he did with fluency and with no trace of any accent foreign to these languages. He also spoke Roumanian, Greek, Polish, and, as was to be expected, several Slavonic dialects. What was unexpected was that he had a considerable knowledge of Gaelic, and amongst his books was a copy of Macpherson's *Ossian*. He used to make me read it out to him, as pronunciation of the language was his weak point. I, on the other hand, although unable to speak more than a few words of Gaelic, could read it from a book with a fairly correct accent—a good enough accent, anyhow, to be understood by Gaelic-speaking Highlanders. It is strange that many of those who speak Gaelic fluently cannot read it, and yet the spelling of Gaelic is very logical and consistent. I had sometimes been able to give great entertainment to old Highlanders by reading to them such stories as Campbell of Islay's *Sgeulachdan Gaidhealach* or *Tales of the West Highlands*.



The Russian's wife and daughters were also linguists.

One day I said to him, "I suppose you never come across people talking a language you don't know something of?"

"Very seldom," he replied, "in fact, I can only remember one occasion on which I heard a language I could not make head or tail of. It happened last summer. We were staying at an hotel in Aberdeen, and were having breakfast. There were two men at a table close to us, and they were talking a language which was entirely strange to me. There was not a word in it which had any affinity to any dialect I know of. I was completely puzzled and have often regretted I had not had the courage to approach them and ask what that language was."

The following year I was in Ceylon, and the first billet I got as a *Sinna Durai* was in a very outlying district called Madulseema, some sixty miles beyond Badulla.

Very few Sinhalese were employed on the coffee estates. More than nine-tenths of the labour force were Tamils recruited from Southern India. It was, therefore, necessary for a planter to talk Tamil fluently, and I at once began to work hard at that language, morning and evening.

My *Perria Durai*—or head manager of the estate—was an old Aberdonian named Garioch. One evening a neighbouring planter called Macmaster came over to dine. Garioch and he were great

cronies, and a year or two previously had gone home on leave together. During dinner-time they talked of their doings at home. Macmaster suddenly remarked, "D'ye mind that old foreigner we got the better of at the Bon Accord?"

"Aye, I mind him fine," answered Garioch. "Vow! but we fairly pit a stap to his blether!"

"What was that?" I asked.

"We were hae'ing oor breakfast at the Bon Accord Hotel," replied Garioch, "and no far frae us was a pairty o' foreigners. There was an auld military-looking gentleman wi' a white moustache and whuskers, and twa-three leddies. Sic a clishmaclaver as they keppit up ye never haird. They were clattering French ae minute and Dutch the niest and whiles Greek or Hebrew—for a' I ken. Macmaster whuspers tae me, 'Let's gie them some Tamil,' sae we talkit Tamil—clear and crouse—sae that they should na lose a word o't. Ye never saw onybuddy sae ta'en aback as the auld foreigner. He sat and glowered at us as if we were twa cobras, and couldna speak anither word. Man, we fairly dinged him! I dinna ken richtly fa he cam' frae—Macmaster pit him doon as a Dutchman, but I'm no' saying he michtna hae been a Russian."

"Yes," I said, "you are right. He *was* a Russian, and a very nice old boy too."

## THE LOST BALLET-GIRL

The prologue to a more complicated and, to me, astounding example of coincidence took place about two years later.

During my leave at home in 1878 I made the acquaintance in London of a dancer.

The ballet at that time had declined from the dazzling days of the 'thirties and 'forties, and not yet had that great genius Cechetti appeared on the scene with his Russian *coryphées* to restore it to its former brilliancy, but such as the dancing was I liked to see it, and especially the whirling pirouettes and graceful arabesques of Stella Western.

Stella's natural temperament was one of wild vivacity, but sometimes there would be a day when the vivacity ran down and a mood of despondency took its place.

Where she had been born and bred I do not know, but I gathered from what she told me that her people lived in the provinces, that they were rich, and that they belonged to a religious sect which enjoined stern and puritanical views of life. Her life at home had been in fact unhappy, and the culminating trouble came when her parents insisted on her marrying a man whom she detested. At the time she was still in her teens. She struggled against the fate which had been arranged for her, but without success. The stern parents would take no refusal. They decreed that she must marry the man of their choice, and so Miss Stella

ran away to London and in course of time found her way into the ballet.

When I left England in December she promised to write to me occasionally to let me know how she was getting on, and to give me news of the dancing world. For six months or so she fulfilled her promise and then her letters ceased. In vain did I write asking what had happened to her; no answer came. Nor indeed did I ever again get a letter from her.

If I have given the impression that the cessation of her letters was of great consequence to me, let me hasten to say that such an impression would be inaccurate. Our friendship was neither deep-rooted nor romantic.

All the same, when I was again in England at the end of 1880 I made an attempt to trace her. I found some of her former companions in the ballet, and they told me that she had been ill with fever in the summer of 1879 and had been taken to a hospital. She had recovered and been discharged, but nothing further of her was known. It was supposed that she had gone back to her people, but nobody knew in what part of the country they lived. Nothing had been seen of her, nor had any news been heard for more than a year. Thus had Stella disappeared without leaving a trace or clue.

I spent the winter in Scotland, and then in February came the news of the fighting at Majuba and a list of the casualties, including my brother's

name amongst the severely wounded. We cabled asking for details, but the reply did not arrive for several days, and by that time I had left England. The Union Castle Liner *Nubian* was on the point of sailing for South Africa, so I took train for Southampton and started for Durban in ignorance of Ian's condition.

There were perhaps twenty passengers on board, and they seemed rather a dull lot; there was, however, among them a nice fellow called Jim Daly, who had been one of Disraeli's private secretaries, and was also, I believe, heir to an Irish peerage. He was only going as far as Madeira, which I regretted. The weather was bad, but we sturdily walked the decks together and did our best to kill time with talk.

There were only three women on board: a Miss Wesley, who sat beside the Captain at meals and played the harmonium at the Sunday service; a Mrs. Learoyd, a pretty dark-eyed little woman whose husband was continually drinking beer and was consequently always in a somnolent condition; and another lady of an unattractive type, her face much powdered, her dresses too smart, her attitude defensive. She always went about in the company of a sprightly young man who was very clever at card games, and who always won when the stakes were high. I did not take part in any of these games.

Some evenings before we got to Madeira Daly arranged a whist-party with the Learoyds and



Miss Wesley. There was a square recess on each side of the saloon just large enough to hold a card table, and after dinner the whist-party always took possession of the recess on the port side. They seemed to enjoy their rubbers and I envied Daly.

On the last evening before we reached Madeira I suggested to the whist-party that I should take Daly's place the following night, and the ladies nodded and said, "Yes, do."

Daly was duly deposited at Madeira and we continued our voyage. After dinner that night I joined the whist-party and we played some rubbers. It was the custom on board the *Nubian* for anyone who wanted a drink to write the particular drink desired on a chit which he signed and handed to the saloon steward in attendance.

As the evening wore on I wanted a drink, so pulling a chit out of the rack I scribbled on it "gin and tonic" and my signature. Now when cards are being dealt such an order is apt to be written hurriedly, and on this particular evening I did not attempt to write my signature legibly; I merely wiggled the pen up and down in a series of acute angles and put a horizontal dash at random to represent the cross of the "t" in my surname. There was no attempt to form the letters of my first name or any pause to indicate the "M" between it and the surname. The signature was, in fact, illegible.

As I picked up my hand, leaving the chit on the table, Mrs. Learoyd pounced upon the chit with

a laugh and cried, "*What* a signature! As if anybody could read that!" and she passed it on to Miss Wesley, who was my partner, saying, "Can you read that, Miss Wesley?"

As Miss Wesley took the scrap of paper I saw her eyes become very wide for a fraction of a second, and then she said in an ordinary tone, "Of course I can," and proceeded quickly to read it out without hesitation and without omitting to mention the "M."

I was absolutely taken aback. There was something peculiarly surprising in the glibness with which she had pronounced my name. I cudgelled my brains in vain to produce a theory to account for her feat. I had not spoken to her previously to that evening. Also I had no reason to think that anybody on board knew my first name. I was mystified.

When we rose from the card-table I waited until Miss Wesley ascended the companion leading to the upper-deck and then, starting in pursuit, I overtook her as she passed the after cutter on the port side.

"Miss Wesley," I said, "how on earth were you able to read my signature?"

Her way of answering my question was to ask me another: "Did you ever know a girl called Stella Western?"

If I were taken aback at her reading my signature I was doubly taken aback now. It was so dumbfounding that this demure young lady—

this reserved young lady who played the harmonium on Sunday—should know anything about my acquaintance with the gay Stella Western that I could not collect my wits, or reply for some seconds. Then I said :

“ Yes, I did. Do you know what has become of her ? ”

“ Yes, I do,” answered Miss Wesley, “ she is on the deck of the *Nubian* talking to you.”

Now I do not know which was the more curious : that we should have travelled together for a week on board the same ship without either of us recognizing the other ; or that, after failing to trace her in England, I should have suddenly discovered her at sea in Lat.  $31.75^{\circ}$  N. ; Long.  $17^{\circ}$  W.

### THE PROPHEPIC LETTER

There is a coincidence—if coincidence it be—which, although lacking in qualities which might amuse or excite, is so strange that it claims to be inserted in these pages.

I once wrote a letter—a nonsense letter. It was dashed off without any thought, and was forgotten as soon as written.

The bulk of it must have been intended to be a farrago of nonsense, and yet it contained a number of definite statements regarding a man's future career which in course of time took place precisely as described in the letter.

The letter was, in fact, a variant of the proverb

which tells us that true words are sometimes spoken in jest.

The genesis of this uncanny letter was in 1893 when I was in Scotland. My brother had written telling me that he was in great perplexity as to whether he should take up a tempting appointment which would probably bind his career to India, or come home. I sat down with the vague idea that it would be well for him to choose the latter alternative, and wrote him a letter which, as presently will be seen, began by enumerating in a haphazard way some appointments which he might perhaps secure at home, and possible service and promotion which might be in store for him; but the list of possible things soon gave way to impossible ones, and the career sketched out for him became so highly coloured as to make those of Alexander the Great or Napoleon comparatively commonplace.

Years after having received this letter my brother sometimes spoke of it as having contained uncannily prophetic sentences and regretted that it had been lost or mislaid. I cudgelled my brains but in vain, for the correspondence had entirely vanished from my memory.

Nearly twenty-five years elapsed, and then one day I received a letter from him dated 31st July 1918, which began :

*My dear old boy,*

*Turning over some papers I struck on the famous*

*letter you wrote me from Kilberry in October '93. Just to make sure it does not again disappear, I have had several copies made of which I now send you one. The original remains in my possession.*

The typed copy which he enclosed begins as follows :

*Kilberry,  
Tarbert, Argyllshire.*

*11th October 1893.*

*My dear old Ian,*

*Yours of 20th ult. arrived to-night. I incline to think that to come home soon is the best step. I certainly wouldn't let extra Indian pay weigh for a moment—a few thousand here and there is nothing, and I don't see that a C.B. is much to a man of a large mind unless it distinctly helps him to something else. Why not come home, run Hythe brilliantly for a couple of years, act as A.A.G. at the War Office for six months, get command of a Brigade on active service—say for the conquest of Morocco, get your K.C.B.? Be especially sent on a mission to Japan, write a book that causes a furore throughout Europe? Invent an entirely new sort of projectile? . . .*

From this point the letter lapses into sheer nonsense. He is described as having fantastic and impossible adventures culminating in his becoming Emperor of Europe. On the writer of the letter he bestows the crown of a country which was not, at the time the letter was written, in



existence as a self-governing nation. The letter concludes thus :

*We flee surreptitiously from the cares of state and, disguised as subalterns, hire a boat on the Woolar lake at two rupees a day and the following year I get my first Bara Singh. (This is evidently a sarcastic allusion to the fact that I failed to get within shot of a Bara singh when in Kashmir in '89.) Disguised as old Highlanders returning to their native land from emigration we purchase a small property in Argyllshire where we spend the evening of life in catching whiting and stalking an occasional blackcock, and in watching the fiery orb sinking in the wide waters of the Atlantic. There's a life for you !*

\* \* \* \* \*

To continue my brother's covering letter of 31st July 1918, he comments on the uncanny letter thus :

*In its way your letter is truly an astonishing instance of the Sight. At first brilliant it fades away as the letter goes on. Your beginning would make the fortunes of half a dozen clairvoyantes. In 1893 you not only suggest I should come home to Hythe and that I should run it brilliantly (which I believe I did), but you name the time—two years—a time during which I actually held the billet 1897 to 1899, although it is a period unrecognized in the tenure of military appointments.*

*I then became A.A.G. for six months. . . . The command of the Brigade on active service for the*

*conquest of Morocco is at any rate so far to the point that it was in Africa to which place I actually went and earned the K.C.B. as stated. Then, most startling of all, comes the "be specially sent on a mission to Japan, write a book that causes a furore throughout Europe."* I was specially sent on a mission to Japan; I did write a book that caused a furore throughout Europe, and the strange thing is that "furore" is exactly the right word in so far as it has some association with "fury." . . . He here describes the fury of a Royal Personage whom passages of the book had offended. He also mentions that the book was translated into French, Italian, German, Japanese, and (by two different translators) into Russian.

Now it is an unquestionable fact that the first seven items of his proposed career were fulfilled to the letter, with the partial exception of the fourth which suggested that his Brigade on active service might be in Morocco; and the curious thing is that this mistake was just the one mistake I would not have made if I had been writing seriously, or, as one may say, objectively.

I had been out in Natal in 1881. I had shared in the general rage against Gladstone's armistice, concluded at the moment when we had suffered the defeats of Majuba and Ingogo, and when Evelyn Wood had just arrived with the cavalry and demonstrated that he could ride round the Boer left and make their position on Laing's Nek untenable. Whether we were right or wrong in re-

garding the armistice with disgust does not matter, the fact remains that since '81 I had been obsessed with the idea that another Boer War was inevitable. It was a coming event which I often thought of and discussed, doubtless to the boredom of my friends.

Why then—if I wrote that letter in the full possession of my senses—did I not locate the Brigade he was to command in South Africa?

Morocco was a country I knew little about and had never thought of as possibly to be connected with a campaign of the British Army, so how comes it that Morocco appears in this sentence, even in the indefinite way in which it is introduced after the word “say”?

The answer to both these questions appears to be this: I was so bent on fantasy and jest that I purposely avoided writing down the name of the *one country* where it was obvious that a campaign was going to take place within the next few years.

As to the eighth item on his programme; that he should invent a new sort of projectile, I have only this to say: that after the astounding way in which the seven first predictions were fulfilled, it is a wonder that he did not take the hint and devote his energies to a study of projectiles. He might have invented a stream-line bullet!

If two or three of the suggested items of his career had “come off” they might be regarded as lucky guesses, but that the whole of the first seven items in the letter were fulfilled in rotation must

be absolutely baffling to anyone who has studied permutations and combinations.

It is impossible to calculate, even approximately, the chances of such a vague programme as an officer's promotion, appointments, campaigns, or decorations. It is otherwise when it is a case of definite figures, such, for instance, as are connected with a pack of cards.

If a well-shuffled pack is put before a card-player and he attempts to draw an ace from it, he knows that the odds are 12 to 1 against his doing so. He also knows that if he names the card—say the ace of spades—that the odds are 51 to 1 against him.

If he succeeds and then says he will next draw the ace of hearts, the odds are only 50 to 1 against his drawing it. But it is a very different matter if at the outset he undertakes, in two attempts, to draw the ace of spades and the ace of hearts *in the order named*. The odds against him would then be 2,550 to 1. And if he undertakes to draw seven named cards successively in the order named, the odds against him would be 583,506,504,000 to 1.

Now I think it can be stated with some confidence that any bookmaker would agree that five hundred thousand millions to one is what would be called an outside chance.

The chances against the seven items mentioned in the letter all being fulfilled would no doubt be very much less than this huge figure, because the chances against his getting some of them—

such as Hythe and the K.C.B.—would be probably very much less than 50 to 1, but on the other hand, the chances against his going on a special mission to Japan would be quite considerable.

There is not only the number of other officers of his age or rank in 1893 to be considered, but there is the question as to whether a war in which Japan would be involved *was to occur precisely at the date* when he had reached a sufficiently high rank to represent this country or India at the seat of war. If the Russo-Japanese War had occurred a few years earlier than it did, he would have been too junior ; and if it had occurred some years later, he would have been too senior for such a job.

No ! The chances against all the first items of the predicted career being identical with the actual career are too great to be accounted for by mere coincidence.

It is easier to believe that what happened at Kilberry in October 1893 was this : that although I sat down *thinking* I was going to write a letter in jest, there was really an imp at my elbow who used me as his amanuensis. How he must have enjoyed his joke !



## XI

### LADY ROBINSON AND THE SNOOKS

I think it was towards the end of June that Ian, who lay in a field hospital somewhere between Newcastle and the Drakensberg, was pronounced fit to start for home. He had had a bad time of it, as besides his smashed-up wrist, which had taken about four months to heal, he had suffered from malarial fever and was so weak that the only way to get him down to Maritzburg was by mule-wagon. Maritzburg was the railhead in those days, and I was to accompany the wagon on my roan pony "Piggy."

Now an unfortunate thing happened. The day before we were to start I went out on the veldt with Harry Wright for a last day's shooting. At the end of the day, when we were on our way back to camp, some hartebeests suddenly started out from behind a small kopje within easy range and I jumped off the pony to have a shot. Now Piggy was a very excellent pony, he had only one fault, and that was that if he were left alone for a moment without being carefully knee-haltered he got away and was very difficult to catch. There was not time to knee-halter him on this occasion, so dismounting I slipped my left arm through the

rein and fired. At the shot Piggy jerked his head back with force enough to break the rein and trotted off. Harry trotted after him and made gallant efforts to catch him, but it was no use : Piggy was too clever ; they dodged and walked and waltzed and cantered all over the veldt until it was dark and we had to return to camp without him.

Some weeks afterwards Piggy was found by some of the men in a Boer's stable, and as they had no doubt of his identity they secured him and brought him into camp. He was put up to auction and bought by Charles Douglas, the adjutant, who used him as a charger. It was a pleasant surprise when I later on received a cheque for him, but at the moment Piggy's absence was an annoying *contretemps*, as there was no spare mount available in camp, and it was a long way to Maritzburg.

Ian started in his mule-wagon the next morning ; he had his soldier-servant with him, and as there was not room for me, I walked into Newcastle, and there by some extraordinary good luck borrowed a little Arab horse. There was no saddle for him, but that was rather an advantage, for he was a quiet little horse and his back was like a nicely stuffed arm-chair.

In time we got to Durban and on board the *Windsor Castle*, which was to take us to Cape Town and then on to England *via* St. Helena and Ascension Island.

Now, we had both since boyhood been very keen

on fishing, whether in burn, river, or sea. I think on the whole sea-fishing attracted us most, as there was always the exciting chance of "getting into" some strange and unexpected monster of the deep. Ian was especially looking forward to fishing at Cape Town and Ascension, for at both places there were large and curious fishes, whose acquaintance we had not yet made, so he gave me very particular instruction to get strong tackle ready.

We were to arrive at Cape Town during a certain night and stay there for the whole of the following day, so before we left Durban we arranged by telegram that on our arrival at Cape Town a fishing boat should come alongside and take us out to the fishing ground.

It was broad daylight when we steamed into the bay. When we had dressed and breakfasted we went on deck and kept an eager look out for our boat.

There was a large native fishing craft near us which had run inshore until she grounded; she had made a large catch of biggish fishes which we were told were snooks; from the boat to the shore there were two long lines of Kaffirs, those going towards the shore each carried in his arms one snook, which he dumped on the shore. The Kaffirs and the snooks were all quite black, they were also wet and glistened in the sun, so both men and fishes seemed to be made of bronze. In Zululand, on ordinary occasions, the costume worn by both sexes was in those days scanty; in size certainly

smaller than a fig-leaf; but the wading Kaffirs had discarded any such ornament and they gave the impression of antique statues on the move.

Now, I should like to say at once that this is the only time I ever saw a snook; I have never caught a snook or attempted to do so; I have not the faintest idea how snooks are caught, whether by net, line, or harpoon; and if anybody should ever say that I went snook-fishing at Cape Town I hereby declare that any such person has been misinformed, or has spoken under a misapprehension.

Whilst we were looking at the Kaffirs and the snooks, Ian's batman, who was as keen on fishing as we were, dashed along the deck and reported that our boat had arrived. We were moving gaily towards the gangway when we were met by an orderly bearing a letter for Ian. In some surprise he opened and read it, and I gathered from his expression that it contained unpleasant news.

"Well, of all the infernal bits of bad luck——" said he under his breath as he handed me the letter. It was headed "Government House," and was an invitation to us both to lunch with Sir Hercules and Lady Robinson.

"Well," I said, "of course we can't go—there's our boat, and all our *bandibast* is made; you must refuse with deep regret."

"My dear boy," retorted Ian, "you *can't* refuse a Governor like that, at least *I* can't—when a soldier on leave is invited by the Governor of a

Colony to lunch—hang it all, he has to go, and you ought to go too.”

“ Well, I can’t,” I said, “ I have promised myself a day’s fishing at the Cape, and wild horses and rows of Governors wouldn’t stop me.”

“ That’s all very well,” said Ian, “ but you know, after all, it would be rather rude. I shall not be able to conceal the fact that you have gone fishing, and I will bet Lady Robinson will feel rather hurt, and will make *you* feel rather hurt, if she ever meets you ! ”

“ *Meets me !* ” I cried. “ How on earth *could* she ever meet me ? My dear boy, we leave to-night for England, and in a month I shall be ten thousand miles from Lady Robinson, and if in the dim and distant future we should ever drift near one another—even *then* we wouldn’t meet. You know that I avoid society functions and ‘ smart people ’ like the plague. No, no ! The betting is a million to one that I never meet her ! Anyhow, good luck to your luncheon party ! Say what you like to the Robinsons—I’m off ! ”

The batman and I were soon sailing out to the offing, and we had a glorious day. We caught angel fish and Hottentot fish and many other strange fish we had never seen before, and returned to the ship quite pleased with ourselves. Ian no doubt envied us, but he had had quite a pleasant time ashore, and he made up for his lost days fishing when we got to Ascension—“ *mais ça c’est une autre histoire.* ”



We arrived in England at the end of July. I stayed in London only a short time, as I was very keen on grouse-shooting in those days. I shot on the 12th with Uncle Archie at a small shooting he had near Luss. A few days afterwards an invitation arrived from Campbell Finlay to stay and shoot at Toward. I accepted with glee and took steamer for Inellan. There was a trap waiting for me at the quay, which got me to Toward a few minutes before eight o'clock. Campbell, who was already dressed for dinner, met me in the hall and took me up to my room.

"Now, we are not going to stand on ceremony," he said; "it is just eight o'clock, so we shall begin dinner! You come in when you like!"

When I was dressed I found my way to the dining-room, where there were perhaps fourteen or sixteen people at dinner. There was one empty chair about the middle of the table, and Campbell indicated it to me with a wave of the hand, but he did not introduce me to either of the ladies who were sitting next my chair. One of them I noticed was large and stately with boldly cut features. She slowly turned to me with a very pleasant smile. I bowed and sat down. She spoke:

"I was very sorry the other day at Cape Town, Mr. Hamilton, to hear that you preferred catching snooks to making my acquaintance, but you see we are fated to meet!"

## XII

### LINKS WITH THE PAST

From the age of fourteen until about the age of thirty I had an obsession for shooting. To shoot grouse or snipe or blackgame, and to shoot as many as possible, was to me the height of earthly enjoyment. When the passion had burnt itself out, what next attracted me was a small but *unusual* bag. I would willingly spend the greater part of the day crawling on the hill or sailing among the Western Isles to get a shot at some game difficult of approach—a wild goat or a seal or some rare duck. A few more years passed, and I had no use for any sort of bag. Birds still attracted me and I stalked them, but the gun was left at home and field-glasses took its place.

Now, the second phase of my shooting aspirations—the small bag arduously obtained—is the one I think that appeals most to the born sportsman. In South Africa in 1881 it used to be said that the reason the Boers were such good shots was that when they were youngsters their economical fathers used to supply them with one cartridge and send them out on the veldt to get a buck for the larder. If they did not get a buck they got a

licking. I expect the young Boer was happy when he had made his bag. I have a kinsman who from his early years has shot grouse and stags prodigiously, but I have observed that what he *really* enjoys is the outwitting of a duck. If the duck is in a seemingly ungetatable place he enjoys it all the more, and I can relate a little incident which illustrates the attraction that this form of sport presents to him.

One evening Humphry—for that is his name—returned from the hill after a long day's shooting, and was about to enter the house when an old gillie, who was standing near the door, informed him that he had seen a mallard on a certain tarn which was more than a mile away and only to be reached by climbing a very formidable hill-side. The receipt of such news at such a moment would not have restrained the ordinary man from getting as quickly as possible into an arm-chair or a hot bath, but this was not its effect on Humphry. Off he went in the direction of the tarn and, after an hour or so, when he reappeared and the old gillie eagerly asked whether he had got the mallard, he made a reply in which I think wit was happily blended with restraint, for he merely said, "I think, Sandy, that mallard of yours must have been a *mallard imaginaire*."

As a youngster, although most of my shooting was done in the West of Scotland, there came certain years when I spent prolonged visits to Skene in Aberdeenshire. There were no grouse there to

speak of, only a few covies which inhabited a patch of moor surrounded by woods, and which packed together very early in the season; but there was excellent low-ground shooting—partridges and pheasant, and on the loch a great variety of duck.

Aberdeenshire is famous for its splendid old houses, and among them Skene well holds its own. To me it always seemed the ideal of massiveness combined with the picturesque, and with imposing surroundings. In front a stately terrace overlooking lawns and what formerly had been a deer park—it still retained its name and its high fencing; beyond, towards the loch, a steepish hill surmounted by great beeches. At the back another hill, and on either side at some distance thick coverts on the outskirts of which straggled a few Scotch firs of great size and ancient appearance.

The house was built at different periods. The central part is very old and its date is unknown. I have seen it described in a book on Aberdeenshire houses as the “oldest stone building in Mar.” Only two faces of this old part are exposed, the others being embedded in the more modern building. The blocks of grey granite are large and rough.

George Skene was the last of the Skenes of Skene and he died in 1825. The property then passed to the Earl of Fife, who in course of time let it to my uncle. After living there for some years as shooting-tenant he became so attached to the place that he bought it. Old Lord Fife had a pleasant

whim. He designed a glorious pattern of large checks for shooting-suits ; it was a veritable tartan composed of various shades of grey, though I think there was one thin line of blue in it. A roll of this he would present to any of his friends to whom he wished to show a mark of his esteem. My uncle was one of the recipients, and when I saw his stout figure clad in such a splendid intricacy of warp and woof I was sorry I did not know Lord Fife and know him sufficiently well to gain, perchance, his esteem. My uncle's interest in his stocks of partridges and pheasants passed away in time and farming and forestry took their place, but in the early 'seventies, when I first was the happy guest of my relatives at Skene, this phase in his inclinations had not yet come.

The nearest property to Skene was Easter Skene, where lived old Mr. McCombie, a very well-known man in the county, for his herd of black polled Angus cattle was famous ; he had also before the date of which I am writing represented his Division of Aberdeenshire in Parliament for many years. He occasionally came to dine, and was always a welcome guest. Very tall and spare and white-bearded he had a genial manner and his brain was well stocked with country lore and old memories.

One night at dinner the talk turned on a full-length portrait of the last of the Skenes of Skene which hung over the fireplace. It was a good picture and showed him in kilt and full tartans. Mr. McCombie remembered him clearly, although



wellnigh fifty years had passed since his death. He told us how he had often when a youth come over from Easter Skene to dine with him, and then turning towards me said :

“ Now, young man, I’ll tell you a strange thing ! I have sat more than once at this very table in the company of a man who fought at the Battle of Culloden, and not only that but he was thirty-five years old when he fought in that famous battle. He fought with the clan Forbes of which he was a member, although his actual patronymic was Smith. He was armed with a pike and a horse-pistol, and did some fighting at close quarters with the cavalry, but the Highlanders hadn’t a chance, he said, there were too many muskets against them. Smith lived to the great age of a hundred and ten, and was a well-known man in Aberdeen. He often used to come out here to stay with the Laird, who had a great fancy for his company.”

Mr. McCombie having concerned himself to impress this link with the past on my adolescent mind, I feel it is not an incident to be omitted from my recorded memories, and although there are many older men than myself about—some of them a full generation older—yet I fancy very few of them have consciously sat at table with a friend who, on another day, had sat at the same table with a man who had been alive in the reign of Queen Anne.

At about the same date as Mr. McCombie told me his reminiscence, another link with the past

was related to me which, though not attaching to such old times, is sufficiently curious to be recorded. Reginald Huth, who was my companion in the adventure narrated in *Snow*, introduced me in 1875 to his father, Mr. Frederick Huth, a City merchant famous for his collection of pictures and miniatures and other works of art. Mr. Huth told me that he had a good view of the Procession which went to St. Paul's to attend a Thanksgiving Service in 1815 after the Battle of Waterloo. On the return of the Procession what particularly clung to his memory was the figure of King George III sitting in his shirt-sleeves in an open carriage and violently beating a small drum which he held between his knees. It appeared to Mr. Huth to be a child's toy drum.

### XIII

## THE PASSENGER WHO CAME ON BOARD AT ST. HELENA

We were a happy family on board the *Warwick Castle* in 1881.

Few ships can ever have carried such a queer medley of different types and nationalities. Officers wounded and convalescent (and who so gay as convalescents homeward-bound ?); big-game hunters, prospectors, engineers, Dutchmen, Spaniards, Americans, people of no particular nationality, a real Attorney-General (of a Colony), an actor, a singer or two, and a couple of Jews, who looked like caricatures of their race, and were reputed to be the possessors of diamond mines (or was it claims ?) of fabulous value.

We played every imaginable boardship game, arranged frequent concerts and entertainments, and produced a bi-weekly newspaper called *The Foghorn of Freedom*. It was an ambitious news-sheet, for it aimed at combining flippantly the characteristics of *The Times*, *Punch*, and *Vanity Fair*. The first number even contained a list of *Berths*, *Marriages*, and *Deaths*. The kind of witticism regarding the *Berths* may be imagined. The *Deaths* were

treated cynically and recorded the great age of those members of the live-stock on board who had proved tough in the eating. The jokes scattered through its columns were almost as feeble as the jokes in real journals.

On a certain day we sighted St. Helena, and great was the disappointment on board when the Captain announced that there was no time for anyone to go ashore, as we would stop only long enough to land a small bag of mails and pick up a single passenger.

When the boat carrying the new passenger was seen approaching, everybody crowded to the side and a hundred eyes, naked or fortified by glass and telescope, were directed on the boat.

In the stern-sheets sat a little man. He wore a small pointed beard, and on his head was a Turkish fez. He was rather slight in build, but wiry and well tanned. He bore himself with an air of composure. His glance was keen, and his eye was unmistakably a seaman's eye.

When the boat came alongside he sprang on to the gangway like a boy of twenty, although he would not have been far short of fifty. When he stepped on deck we saw that he was quite at home there.

That night at dinner-time we found that his place had been set right in the middle of our party. My brother (who was one of the convalescents) and I sat together on one side of the table, and opposite to us were Eddy, a New York shipbuilder or ship-owner (I forget which), and a singer and his wife.

The singer was an Englishman, but had lived for some time in Brazil and other South American countries; his name was Warre. The Warres were both very nice. Fielding calls one of his characters a "jolly brisk" young man. The adjectives would apply to both the Warres. Eddy, also, was exceedingly good company, though rather argumentative.

The new passenger had been placed between Eddy and the Warres, so he was directly facing us. He joined in our conversation, whatever might be the subject, with a courteous ease. His intelligence and knowledge seemed to be unusual, and if anyone told a tale, he had a knack of capping it—not aggressively, but in a natural and informing manner.

I remember that Eddy began talking about the construction of his ships, some already at sea, and some still on the stocks. The Passenger was interested, and made many remarks of a technical nature about tonnage and engines and keel plates and rivets, both the round-headed and square-headed variety. He seemed to know all about Eddy's ships, indeed he once or twice corrected Eddy when the latter had made some slip about friction or revolutions, or some technical point which conveyed no particular meaning to the rest of us.

What was even more striking than the versatility of his knowledge was his intimate acquaintance with places. If anyone mentioned a place,



whether it was in Europe or America or elsewhere, he invariably showed by his comments that he was quite familiar with it. It did not matter whether we talked of town or country, the Passenger always joined in and gave us the impression that we must have struck upon the spot where he had been born and bred.

After dinner, when I was on deck, Ian came up to me laughing and said, "Come along to Eddy's cabin. There is a conspiracy afoot!"

When we got to the cabin we found the Warres and Eddy there.

"Now, boys," said the latter, "this is a durned serious matter. We were all getting on very happily until this old man of the sea turns up and monopolizes all the talk. Mind, I don't say he isn't a nice old man, but it will be good for him and everybody else if we talk about something now and then which he isn't acquainted with.

"Now, I see the problem like this. Every locality we've talked about he's put his oar in and talked three to our two. Now, we've got to find a locality he hasn't been to and knows nothing about, and then we'll discuss it till he's mad. See?"

"Agreed!" said Ian.

"Good!" said Warre.

"Right!" said I.

"Yes, do let's," said Mrs. Warre.

"Well," continued Eddy, "I guess we've done a fair amount of travelling among us, and I want

you all to think of the most off-the-trail place you were ever in and to start yarning about it. You, sir," addressing Ian, "have done some sauntering in Central Asia—Little Thibet, wasn't it?"

"Yes," assented Ian. "I went some five marches beyond Leh in Little Thibet, but there wasn't much sauntering about it!"

"Well, you freeze on to Leh. Tell us all about Leh. I guess Leh will be one of our trump cards!" Then Eddy turned to me. "That story of yours about the poisoned fish in the Ceylon low-country was a good one. You might tell it again and throw in some local details—names of villages and natives."

"There weren't any villages or natives down there," I replied; "besides, it is too long a story. No! I shall find something better than that to talk about."

"Good! And now, Mr. Warre, how about Brazil?"

"Well, I don't know——" replied Warre doubtfully.

"Tell them about the *plagiarios*," suggested Mrs. Warre.

"That sounds like Mexico," said Eddy.

"It is," assented Warre, "right in the middle of Mexico. Yes, that's what I shall choose for my sermon. But what are *you* going to talk of? How about the tidal wave and the ship that grounded in the market square?"

"No," said Eddy, "I guess I shall go a bit

inland this time. I shall tell you something about tornadoes."

Thus were the test subjects fixed up. It was arranged that Eddy should lead off, followed by Warre; Ian was then to have his turn, and I was to bring up the rear.

The secret conclave was ended and the conspirators mingled with the innocent passengers. The prospective victim was there. No suspicion of his coming trip to Coventry lurked in his serene expression.

When we sat down to table that night we were all in a gay mood and inclined to laugh at any remark. The gaiety was not confined to the conspirators, the new passenger laughed as heartily as anyone. During a pause, the gentle voice of Mrs. Warre was heard asking the Passenger if he had ever been in a typhoon. "I have," he answered. Whether he was going to tell his experiences or not I do not know, for Eddy at once seized his opportunity and started on his theme.

"Typhoons are pretty big things, I understand. They cover a large area, but they haven't got the force of some of our tornadoes. Isn't that so?" he said, addressing the Passenger.

"Yes, your tornadoes are more concentrated," he replied, "but you can hardly compare the two; it is like comparing an axe to a gimlet."

"Well, anyhow," continued Eddy, "I'll just give you some details about tornadoes. Just a little over two years ago I was at Lee Summit, on

the western border of Missouri, when a tornado came along. Well, there are some things that one can't describe ; but I seriously began to think that the State of Missouri was going to be shifted on to the top of Illinois, or perhaps Kansas, for the wind was blowing in both directions. The noise was such that you could see people yelling at you from the distance of one yard and not hear a sound. Some of the damage caused by the wind was peculiar. A lumber-wagon which was standing near our house was blown right over a cornfield into a meadow. It didn't touch the corn ; it flew right over the field like a dead leaf. A cultivator weighing six hundred pounds was carried eighty-six yards and twisted into scrap iron, and a ten-gallon keg filled with vinegar, which was lying close by, was carried forty rods in precisely the opposite direction. Chickens were blown away and found afterwards half a mile off entirely stripped of their feathers."

" Yes," said the Passenger, " these are just the things that do happen, but your Lee Summit tornado was, after all, rather a mild one. Just two years previously, in June '77, there was a tornado at Mount Carmel in Illinois. Every house on the south side of the main street was totally destroyed. The spire, vane and gilded ball of the Methodist Church were blown fifteen miles in a nor'-easterly direction. A sack of corn was blown five miles into the State of Indiana. There was a man there called Lewis Gott who was trying to get home.

As he approached his house he saw it go up bodily and plunge into a cloud. That was the last he ever saw of his home."

When the laughter caused by the picture of Lewis Gott trying to get home had subsided, Ian remarked, "That's a little too thick, you know. You surely don't mean seriously that the whole house was blown away?"

"Indeed I do," answered the Passenger. "Isn't that right, Mr. Eddy?"

"Absolutely," said Eddy, "quite a common feature of a tornado. Some houses are blown to bits, and others are blown away without being damaged until they drop. Now, there was a more curious case than Mr. Gott's at Irving in May '79. Ever been to Irving, sir?"

"Yes," said the Passenger.

"Well," continued Eddy, addressing our side of the table, "there were four houses situated in the bottom of a draw leading into Game Fork Creek from Timber Creek. Three of them were smashed into wooden toothpicks, and the fourth, which belonged to Robert Reid, was lifted up like a feather. Mr. Reid was inside and he felt that something queer was happening, and thought he would go out and have a look round. It was pitch dark, but he managed to open the door and stepped out. Instead of stepping on to the ground he fell twenty or thirty feet, and has been a cripple ever since."

"Yes, poor fellow," said the Passenger, "he was



not so lucky as his neighbour, Mr. Morgan, in the same storm. Do you know Mr. Morgan, Mr. Eddy ? ”

“ I do,” replied Eddy gloomily.

“ Mr. Morgan and his family had taken refuge in the cellar, when suddenly the house was blown away. They saw it go. They watched it disappear into a dark mass of whirling clouds. They watched it just as you might watch a topsail bellying, or a balloon blown away from her moorings.”

Our breath was taken away by these stories ; we didn’t quite know whether to believe them or not ; but one thing was quite evident—the Passenger had won the first hand.

Our glances now fell on Warre, and to give him a lead Ian addressed him : “ You’ve travelled a good deal in Mexico, Warre ! Now, that’s a country of which I am profoundly ignorant ; do tell us something of your adventures there.”

“ Very well,” said Warre, “ I’ll tell you about a rather exciting journey I made a few years ago between Guanajuato and Guadalajara. I was with Edward Whitelaw, a countryman of our friend Eddy’s, and he was a splendid fellow to have as a travelling pal. He knew Mexico inside out, and he was a very determined hard-bitten sort of chap. We had been some time at Guanajuato when we booked our seats in the diligence to Guadalajara. The journey takes about two and a half to three days. We were to start at five the next morning.

“ The Mexican friend with whom we had been

staying advised us to adopt the Mexican plan of taking very little money with us, and carrying no watches or valuables, as we were sure to be visited by *plagiarios* during our journey, but as we were not returning to Guanajuato we could not leave our watches or valuables behind, and so we could not see our way to falling in with his suggestion. ‘Besides,’ said Whitelaw, ‘I have a valuable here which will protect the other valuables,’ and he pointed to his Remington rifle which was rolled up in a waterproof cover.

“In that part of Mexico it is exceptional to make a long journey without being attacked by brigands or kidnappers—*plagiarios* as they are called. The usual routine of the business is that the brigands approach the diligence at a suitable spot and call out, ‘*cara en tierra.*’ The travellers get out and lie with their faces to the ground; the brigands then relieve them of their money and baggage, and of any part of their clothing which they take a fancy to, and go away. There is no bloodshed unless the travellers show fight, and then the brigands either decamp or there is a lot of bloodshed.

“The diligence we were to travel in was one of the kind made to carry nine passengers, all inside, the baggage—there was very little of it—was on the top. Besides ourselves there was only three travellers, two ladies and a man. They were all Mexicans. One of the ladies was a Charity Sister, the other fat and elderly. They were neither of

them attractive. The old lady spent most of the time rolling cigarettes and smoking them. The man was an important-looking personage; he was extraordinarily stout and had an abnormally large moustache, which was waxed. He was the most pompous-looking man I ever saw. We learned that his name was Don Pancho Gonsalez and that he belonged to one of the best families of Guadalajara.

“At the end of the first stage, when we were changing our mules, Whitelaw remarked that it would be healthier if we travelled on the top of the diligence, and at once proceeded to climb up. The *cochero* made violent objections, but Whitelaw soon pacified him. We arranged the trunks and baggage rather cleverly round the sides and spread our blankets in the middle. It was much more comfortable than inside, and made a good fortress in case of an attack. Whitelaw laid his Remington in a handy place, and I reloaded my Colt revolver and put two dozen loose cartridges into the right-hand pocket of my coat. We kept a sharp look out for an attack, especially when we got to a *barranca*, but there was no sign of any *plagiarios*.”

“What is a *barranca*?” asked Ian.

“A *barranca* is a sort of gully. The *plagiarios* in nine cases out of ten attack you in a *barranca* when the mules are struggling uphill.

“Well, nothing happened. We spent the night at Lagos de Moreno and started at five o'clock next morning. We had a long day of it as the

diligence stuck in a mud-hole. We had a stiff job pulling it out, as the harness was all rotten and gave way every time the mules got a good strain on. We didn't get in to the *hacienda* at Venta until eight or nine o'clock at night. I tell you I was getting rather sick of *tortillas* and *frijoles*——"

"Well," cried Eddy, "I like *frijoles*. I reckon they're about the best thing in Mexico."

"Yes, I agree with you," said the Passenger.

"What the deuce are *frijoles*?" asked Ian.

"Beans," said Warre.

"Yes, but they're beans that are peculiar to Mexico, and they fry them very cunningly," retorted Eddy.

"Yes," continued Warre, "but you can have too much of a good thing! Where was I? Oh, yes, we started at two o'clock next morning—pitch dark, of course—and after a monotonous drive got to the Bridge of Tololotlan—across the big river—about midday. After the river there was a flat bit of country with fine trees and crops, and as we jingled along I fell asleep—as sound a sleep as I ever slept.

"I was awakened by a violent kick from White-law. We were crawling up a *barranca*. The sides were not very high, but there were a lot of trees and bushes about, which here and there made a regular archway over the gully. About fifty yards ahead of us were two horsemen coming towards us at a walk; one of them had a carbine in his hand. I ran my eye over the jungle on each side

for any signs of an ambush, and I suddenly saw the head of a man half hidden by a bush. I noticed that he had discarded his *sombrero*, which is rather an unusual thing for a Mexican to do in the middle of the day. He had a coloured handkerchief tied round his head. At the same moment one of the horsemen who had reached our leading mules yelled out, '*Cara en tierra!*'

"He had hardly got the words out when Whitelaw fired.

"I heard the door of the diligence opened and things happening below me, but from where I lay I could see nothing but the side of the *barranca*. Several shots were fired at us at close range, and there was a whizzing and cracking of bullets. Whitelaw was firing away steadily, and I directed rapid fire at suspicious bushes; there was one bush especially about thirty yards off—almost overhanging the road—from which several shots had come, so I peppered it systematically. The shots became less frequent and then ceased altogether. Since the shooting had begun I hadn't seen a sign of anybody.

" 'I think that's the end of it,' said Whitelaw; 'they've skedaddled.'

"When we had begun to look about, the first thing I saw was the apparently lifeless body of Don Pancho lying face downwards in the road. 'Good Lord! They've killed the Don,' I cried.

" 'You bet not,' said Whitelaw, and he proceeded to shout at the apparent corpse, telling him the



coast was clear. Don Pancho slowly turned over. His face was a sight. I never saw such an expression of funk on any human countenance. We helped him to his feet. The two ladies had remained inside the diligence, The Sister was kneeling in one corner and she held a rosary in her hands. The fat lady was sitting in another corner puffing vigorously at her cigarette.

"When we got started again Whitelaw and I resumed our places on the top. 'That was a neat shot of yours,' said Whitelaw after we had passed the bush into which I had fired so many shots. I looked round. From our new position we could see the body of a man. He appeared to be standing on his head in the middle of the bush; only his legs were visible.

" 'A funny thing about my first shot,' remarked Whitelaw. 'I shot the fellow dead and he didn't fall out of the saddle. The horse bolted with him. That's what comes of riding in a Mexican saddle.'

"Well, there's not much more to tell; a mile or two farther on we got to a village—I forget its name——"

"Arroyo del Enmedio?" suggested the Passenger.

"I believe that *was* it," said Warre, but his face fell, and his expression became so serious as he stammeringly tried to proceed that we simultaneously burst into a roar of merriment. Glances were directed at us from every part of the saloon,

and I heard a lady say, "They do have fun at that table. I wonder what the joke is!"

"That's the end of my story," said Warre. "Nothing else of any interest occurred."

"And a very good story, too," said the Passenger. "The reason I laughed so much at the finish was at the excellent picture you drew of Don Pancho Gonzalez. He is an unfortunate man with brigands."

"When I was at Guadalajara some years ago, he was one of a large party of well-known people who went one day for a picnic to a place a few miles from the town. The men all rode; the ladies went in their carriages. As they were sitting down to their picnic an alarm was raised, and it was seen that some ugly-looking gentry were approaching them from two directions. The men at once, although they were armed, made a dash for their horses, leaving the ladies to their fate. The men all got away, except Don Pancho Gonzalez, who, as you know, is extremely fat, and who was unable to mount his horse. The brigands, or *ladrones* as it would be more correct to call them, and who as a matter of fact were only armed with sticks and *machetas*, stripped the ladies and Don Pancho not only of their valuables but of practically all their clothing and departed with their loot; but before going they gave Don Pancho a terrific flogging. He was unable to sit on a horse for weeks afterwards."

The conversation became general and animated.

It was agreed that Don Pancho richly deserved his flogging, and Mrs. Warre expressed surprise that his pomposity had survived such an ordeal; but in everybody's mind there was the predominant idea that our conspiracy was in jeopardy.

Eddy abruptly addressed my brother.

"Any brigands in Thibet?"

"I don't know," said Ian. "I never was in Thibet. The nearest I have been to it is Little Thibet, which is really a part of Kashmir."

"Oh, is it?" said Eddy. "But Kashmir is quite a small country, isn't it?"

"Hardly as big as the U.S.A. perhaps," he replied, "but all the same there is plenty of elbow-room in it. It is by the glorious emptiness of its snow-covered spaces that Kashmir makes its impression upon the muscles at the time and, afterwards, upon the memory. Neither maps nor figures are capable of conveying these sensations, but I might do something that way by telling you of a race against time and space which took place there in 1876."

I here noticed a very distinct twinkle in the Passenger's eyes and a gentle smile overspread his features.

"After a couple of ghastly hot weathers, one at Mooltan and the other in a mud fort on the far side of the Indus, I had become entitled to long leave. The 92nd that summer was under the command of Major George White—he is now a full Colonel and a V.C. When I hardened my heart

and put on my sword to ask him in full Orderly Room for six months' leave to Kashmir, he said :

“ ‘ Can't run to it, Master Johnnie. We've got to keep one officer per company. But I'll tell you what—we are expecting another sub from home, and if he arrives in time you shall have four months' extension added to the two months which is all I can give you now. But, remember ; if you hear nothing more from me, you report for duty here within sixty days from to-morrow. So now—be off with you ! ’

“ I must tell you that under the influence of two or three enthusiasts we had managed to work ourselves up into fervour over the glory of big-game shooting. Not tiger, buffalo or rhino ; no, no ! These were toys for effete Majors on elephants. Our game was the single-handed struggle against nature with her avalanches, glaciers and precipices ; and the one and only trophy which should show that we had fought and conquered was a record head—markhor, ovis ammon, ibex or bara singh—a record head checked with the regimental tape, and confirmed by the regimental judges.

“ As you can imagine, that night at Mess there was much talk as to how I should spend my leave, and many suggestions from my brother-subalterns, and I then and there came to a rash decision. Astor had been opened to sportsmen only the previous year. My brother-subaltern, Harry Dick-Cunningham, had got there during his six months and had

not only made a fine bag but—on his very last day—had fired at and missed a one-horned markhor whose head, he declared, gave him a headache whenever he thought of it. The beast was a Colossus and his single horn was monstrous! I determined to go in search of him.

“Now from Gujrat, on the Indian frontier, to the home of the big one-horner was round about two months’ comfortable marching; but I reckoned to cover the distance in twenty-five days by doing double marches, with now and then a treble march thrown in. What it came to was this: if my extension of leave did not turn up within one week of getting to my shooting-ground, I would have to race back again at the same break-neck speed, and I should have spent seven-eighths of my leave marching with my rifles in their cases.

“But not only on account of time must I put my best foot forward. There was the question of the grand annual Indian walking-race for a nullah. By that unwritten law which carries five times the force of the written, the first man to pitch his tent at the foot of a nullah—or mountain valley—became the owner of that nullah within the boundaries of the watersheds, as long as he stayed there; and for any other sportsman to pass over his watershed would be to commit a crime as heinous as that of removing his neighbour’s landmark. So it was a race with a big prize at the end of it that was now about to take place.

“On April 13 I took train to railhead; drove



thence next morning eighteen miles to the frontier; packed my kit on to mules and then marched twenty-one miles upwards, feeling the parched air of the plains give way by degrees to the cool breath of the mountains. Next morning I awoke to the tinkle of cattle-bells and the swish of waterfalls. The grass was green instead of grey. Huge fat black buffaloes grunted in the rushes and I heard a song-bird sing. This was too much. I had to run away out of sight of my coolies and let off some of my ecstasy by cutting capers.

“The following six days, and some of the nights as well, saw us marching along the road by double marches until we struck the Wular Lake—a mirror in which were reflected ranges of snowy peaks. On this lake, it was said, some incredible loafers belonging to bad regiments floated away their leave with wheat-coloured Kashmiri women. Miserable sybarites!

“Neither to the right nor to the left did we turn. Straight as an express bullet we rowed to Bundipur; landed and made for the Tragbul, which, although only 7,000 feet, was so plastered with snow that it had only been open one day. Yet here I was already up against my haunting fear; report came that two of my rivals had got over it that morning.

“Struggling along through the thick snow; cheering on my coolies; sticking in the drifts like a fly dropped into a cream jug; I sought to reach a village called Kunzelwan. In the afternoon,

turning a spur we saw a crowd of men pitching tents and trying to light fires. One of my rivals, by the Lord! This was the moment to make a spurt, so we shoved on, and then a terrible thing happened. As night was falling, and I had got within half a mile or so of Kunzelwan, the never-ending suck of the snow was too much for a tendon in my left leg. Only with much pain and supported by Rajvelli, my shikari, did I at last hobble into the village. There I found my other rival, Lovell of the 9th, with his camp pitched amongst the houses. By luck I had come upon the kindest of mortals, one who also understood sprains, and forthwith he fomented and bandaged the damaged muscle as cleverly as any nursing sister.

“None the less, when next morning came, I could not walk a step. In despair I watched Lovell and his little column wind away into the trackless snow; and then my eye fell upon a half-starved pony wandering disconsolately over the snow. Within ten minutes I had struck a bargain with the owner and was perched upon its projecting spine. All went swimmingly for the first few miles, but when the sun got power, the frozen crust gave way and let me in for toss after toss. Steeple-chasing was a joke to it! The snow lay thirty feet deep in places——”

An inarticulate sound came from the Passenger. It was in the nature of a slight cough, but it was sufficient to break the thread of Ian's tale. He addressed the Passenger;

"I assure you, thirty feet at least, though only of course in places."

"Naturally," retorted the Passenger, "what else did you expect? On the slopes of Nanga Purbat, which overlooks that trail of yours, you will find snow lying 300 feet deep in midsummer."

This remark of the Passenger's was something of a shock, but he did not say he knew about Nanga Purbat from *personal experience* and, anyhow, it is a long cry from Nanga Purbat to Little Thibet. Ian went on with his story:

"Luckily snow makes soft falling even with a pony on the top of you, and somehow we got to Gurez, an assortment of hovels 8,000 feet or so above the sea. Lovell was anchored there for the night right enough. He was not *quite* so glad to see us again, so it struck me, though kind and hospitable as ever.

"Next morning Lovell left me again, and this time I think he thought he was really saying good-bye, and certainly I thought so myself. What was I to do? The pony plan was played out, and so was the pony. We seemed to be absolutely *done*. Then Rajvelli had an idea: an idea which showed at the same time a great heart. He suggested that I should leave behind the cooking-pots, tinned soups and stores, one rifle, my tent and camp-bed, and that he and Lassoo, the second shikari, together with the four coolies thus released from their loads, should carry me in a litter made with a pole and blankets. Only those who know the dignity of a

shikari will understand how fine it was of Rajvelli and Lassoos thus to risk losing caste with their companions. No sooner said than done, and that night I supped, not exactly in heaven, but not so far off it either, on the snow of a 13,000 feet pass within a few hundred yards of Lovell's encampment.

"Whether it was the intense cold I know not, or the frugal supper of native chupattis and water, but next morning my leg felt as sound as a bell. All the same, I was for giving myself every chance, and resolved to stick to my extemporized palanquin until midday, when we hoped to be off the snow.

"After a midday rest I walked on with Lovell. The four men released from carrying me were now able to lighten the loads of the others, so my party came on comparatively quickly, but Lovell's men were outpaced and soon became mere specks in the vast stretch of snow. We came at last to a spot where the track rounded a precipitous projection of the mountain. In front of us lay the promised land of Astor, behind us an infinite space of snow, broken only by Rajvelli and his men swinging along in our tracks, but of Lovell's party not a sign. For some time we waited and swept the distance with our glasses—still no sign.

" 'You had better push on,' said Lovell.

" 'Well, perhaps I had,' said I, 'but tell me, is there any chance of our meeting again? I am making for Astor.'

"This last confidence was really a breach of etiquette. In the race to the north it is usual to

keep one's goal a strict secret, and it would be an unpardonable act of inquisitiveness to ask a rival sportsman where he was making for; but, after so much kindness from Lovell, I could not resist putting my cards on the table and letting him know my objective.

“ ‘ And I for the northern nullah of Nanga Purbat,’ he replied.

“ This was indeed good news, for I had got it into my head that we were racing for the same nullah. With shouts of ‘ Good luck ! ’ we parted.

“ At Astor I enriched my diet of chupattis by a *kilta* of dried apricots, and pushed on. We were bound for the Belatchi Nullah, and they told us at Astor that we couldn't get through, as the Ronda Pass—19,000 feet—was still closed. Well, we managed to get over it somehow, all except the skin of my nose which was frizzled off by a blizzard on the summit of the pass.

“ On the 9th of May I took possession of the Belatchi Nullah, though I had no tent to pitch according to the rites of the law. In eight days I had shot eight head : markhor, ibex, and burrel—a forty-inch ibex among them. By that time my hour had struck. Even granting that we could go back faster than we had marched up, I was running some risk of committing the awful crime of overstaying my leave, and yet I was sorely tempted to stay one day more. As the coolies were actually marching off I turned round and swept for the last time the western flank of the



great nullah, and suddenly an apparition set my telescope trembling. Miles away and thousands of feet above me on to the white skyline stepped a huge markhor. Black as a hearse he stood against the sky, and even as I gazed four others joined him. By St. Hubert ! It was the one-horner !

“ People talk of the sad partings of lovers, but they are nothing to the pangs I felt at that moment !

“ Farewell to Astor ! Double and treble marches down south towards the frontier and Mooltan, and then as I neared the Wular Lake there was put into my hand a telegram, forwarded by runner from Murree : ‘ *Four months’ extension granted all wish you luck George White.*’

“ Well, I shall not inflict another four months of travel on you ! The rest of my marching must be condensed into a few words. Having bagged markhor and ibex, I thirsted for ovis ammon ; so, on the shores of the Wular Lake, we changed course for Little Thibet. To Leh was about 250 miles on the map ; what it was on the snow I couldn’t tell you. We marched as if the Devil was after us, over the dangerous Zeoji La and other passes whose names I have forgotten. From Leh we pressed on five marches eastwards to a small desolate hamlet called Gya. My luck held good ; I got my oves—three of them—and other trophies as well. We then marched west along the Indus to Skardu, 170 miles, and thence another 50 back to the Belatchi Nullah, where I bagged the one-horner.”

“ Good man ! ” interjected the Passenger.

“ Oh, you *did* get him ! ” cried Mrs. Warre.

“ Oh, yes, I got him right enough, but it took some doing. For three days we climbed and crawled over terrific rocks and slopes, and then at last we spied him and I got my shot. I should like to tell you something about the eagles and the snow-leopards, but you must be sick of it ! From India to Gya is a far enough journey for one night—don’t you think so ? ”

“ True,” said the Passenger, “ it is a long way to Gya. But, tell me this, please : How does an animal so large as the ovis ammon find sustenance on those barren hills of shingle ? ”

“ I have often wondered at that myself,” said Ian.

“ Did you give backsheesh to the old hermit in the cave ? ” inquired the Passenger.

“ Yes,” replied Ian, turning red with vexation, “ the holy man of Gya had to be squared. I was pestered by Rajvelli until I gave him a tame sheep so that he might pray for our success with the wild ones. Don’t tell me you’ve been there, though ! I simply can’t bear it—we none of us can.”

“ Sorry,” said the Passenger, “ yes, I have been there and fine fun I had with the Brahminy ducks and the geese on the salt marsh ! ”

One glance at Ian’s face showed that the Passenger had got home.

Our best card, Little Thibet, had been over-

trumped ; so it was now my deal, and already I felt I was beaten. Sometimes when playing a match at golf a crucial moment arrives when it is essential to get your ball on to the green, but you know that the green is twenty yards farther than you *can* get with your mashie, and there is no other club you can use from such a lie. Your feelings as you address the ball are the feelings I now experienced.

I had intended to tell of how North Davidson and I, after wandering in the jungle and seeing no living soul for five days, had suddenly come across a wild elephant tied by his hind legs to a tree, and of the curious things we learnt from the Moorman hunters who had caught him ; but now this seemed too trivial and commonplace an incident to relate. The Passenger's ubiquitous knowledge had so impressed me that I felt it was quite likely that catching wild elephants was one of his ordinary pastimes.

Suddenly I decided not to talk of my own hunting adventures at all, but of those of a very fine old sportsman with whom we had stayed when we reached the sea coast on that expedition. His name was Stuart Munro, and he had been the hunting companion of Sir Samuel Baker. He was tall and very powerful and somewhat resembled Tolstoy in appearance, but he was lame, and indeed crippled, from a mauling he once got from a bear. I determined to tell the story of his fight with the bear.

Ian kicked me under the table.

I at once addressed the company, but the twinkling eyes of the Passenger were upon me and my voice sounded like the voice of a sheep.

"Our distances in Ceylon are in no way to be compared with the distances in Mexico or Kashmir, but all the same, when we made our way through the low country from Haputale to the eastern sea coast, we were jolly glad to get there."

"Where did you strike the coast?" asked the Passenger.

"About a march south of Batticaloa," I replied; "after we had rested a few days we pushed on to the north."

"I wonder if you came across my old friend Stuart Caradoc Munro? You must have passed near his coco-nut estate."

"Oh, yes," I said, "we stayed with him."

"Now, there's a splendid type of man!" cried the Passenger. "What a pity he was so shockingly mauled by that bear! You know about that, I suppose?"

"Yes, of course I do," I replied.

"He was out in the vembas after bear one day," continued the Passenger, "and had a shot at one. He hit it, but not quite in the right place. The bear, though badly wounded, was able to retire into a clump of thorny jungle. Besides his rifle Munro had a good hunting-knife or dagger in his belt and was accompanied by a little dog. Well, he crawled into the clump on the tracks of the

bear. Before he knew what was happening the bear charged him, knocked the rifle out of his hand, and began gnawing his left thigh. The bear was lying upon him in such a way that he could not move, but his right arm was free and he managed to get out his dagger, which had a ten-inch blade.

“Now, if Munro had been able to use the dagger with a straight arm he could have killed the bear in a moment, but, unfortunately, the bear was so close to him that he had to hold the dagger upside down, in the way that English actors always hold it on the stage. He could, therefore, do nothing with it. Again and again he struck the bear with all his force, but he couldn’t even get through the skin—the only result was that the bear munched and worried his leg harder than ever. All this time the little dog had been barking at the bear, but had avoided coming to close quarters. The bear had so far taken no notice of him, but just as Munro was about done the dog came so close that the bear left off chewing Munro and made a rush at the dog. The old man had just strength enough to pick up his rifle and finish off his enemy. And that’s the story of Munro’s fight with the bear!”

The story did not interest *me* so much as it did the other conspirators, but I had to acknowledge to myself the accuracy with which it was related, especially in regard to Munro’s grip on his dagger. As a fencer, who had also had some practical experience in using a dagger, it had always seemed to me an extraordinary and inexplicable convention



that actors and artists should continually depict the holding of a dagger in a way which would be futile except for the purpose of suicide, *and I had intended to bring out this point* in telling the story. There seemed to be something quite uncanny in hearing the Passenger reciting my unspoken thoughts. I began to think he was the Devil himself.

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

Twenty years after this episode in the Atlantic I was dining one night with friends in London, and related how the Passenger had defeated us. There was a guest present, whom I had not previously met, and he exclaimed, "There is only one man in the world the Passenger can have been—and that is Captain Milbank—Captain John Milbank!"

"You are right!" I replied. "Captain Milbank it was! I wonder what has happened to him, and if he is still to the fore?"

"Very much so," answered the guest. "He is still Senior Marine Salvage Officer at Lloyd's. He returned a few days ago from Australia, and I shall be delighted to effect a meeting between you and him. If it suits you I shall arrange a day next week, when you shall both come and dine with me."

I was highly pleased at the thought of again meeting a man who was not only such an amazing personality, but with whom, during the remainder

of that voyage from St. Helena to England, I had struck up a warm friendship.

I received no letter from the guest, but a few days afterwards in some newspaper I read with emotion an obituary notice of Captain John Milbank.

\* \* \* \* \*

Another twenty years passed—indeed twenty-two years and more—and during that period I have regarded Captain Milbank as being beyond the reach of mundane communication.

Being curious, whilst writing down the above memories, to know by what route he had travelled to Leh, I wrote a letter to the Controller of Intelligence at Lloyd's towards the end of last year (1923), asking if any records existed of the travels and adventures of "my old friend, the late Captain Milbank." It can be imagined how great was my surprise—my agreeable stupefaction—when I received an answer from the Controller saying that he had great pleasure in informing me that my old friend, Captain John Milbank, was well and hearty in spite of being in his ninety-first year. He also gave me his address, which was in London. This letter has been the means of my again meeting the Passenger, and what a joy it has been to see him and to talk and laugh over old times! I have learned from him that he went into Little Thibet from Darjeeling. He had more than a casual acquaintance with Central Asia, for, during the fighting in 1862, he was sent with dispatches

from Northern China across the Gobi desert to St. Petersburg—and he got there. That was a good toddle!

It recalls to my mind an incident which Abel Lefranc, the genial secretaire of the Collège de France, once related to me.

He was sitting in a country inn in Brittany when a youth, and there were several men forthgathered who were boasting about the long walks they had taken. One had walked from Morlaix to Vannes, and another from Quimper to Nantes, a third declared that he had walked from Bordeaux to Lourdes. There was a little old man sitting by the fire who said nothing, but puffed away at his pipe. One of the party addressed him, asking if he had ever taken a long walk. The old man took his pipe out of his mouth and replied, “*J’ai marché de Madrid à Moscou.*” “*Et,*” shouted Lefranc, waving his arms in glee, “*c’était vrai ! Il était dans la Grande Armée !*”

The travels and adventures of Captain John Milbank would fill many volumes, so they must be highly condensed to be expressed in a paragraph.

He was born at sea on the 16th of July 1834, on board the British ship *Emma Eugenia*, in Lat. 23° S., Long. 152° E. He became in due course master of many ships. At one time Commander of an Egyptian gunboat, at another Captain of the renowned *Shun-lee* sailing under the Red Dragon, and fighting pirate junks from Shanghai to Han-Kow. For an incredible number of years he

girdled the earth and sailed on every sea ; for many years more, as Senior Salvage Officer at Lloyd's, he tracked scuttlers and smugglers and pirates to the uttermost ends of the earth, and solved mysteries of the sea that were deemed insolvable. Alert, resourceful, sympathetic, amazing—and still endowed with almost a youthful energy—such is the Passenger.

## XIV

### BUDDING ARTISTS

I had copied a picture in the Dresden Gallery in 1874, and the following year painted "from the life" in Rome. Since then whenever an opportunity had offered itself to me of spoiling canvases and wasting paint in the studio of my painter friends I had seized it, but it was not until the autumn of 1883 that I began to work seriously under Legros at the Slade.

Legros, who had succeeded Poynter about the year 1881, had two assistants—Mr. Slinger and Mr. Durham. Mr. Slinger was a very old retired Indian Judge, tall in stature, with a long white beard. He was noted for his sarcasm, which was perennial.

Mr. Durham, commonly alluded to as Johnnie Durham, was a mild and polite little man, whose duties were chiefly concerned with the etching class. He was the Guardian of the acid jars and the Director of the printing-press. He was an authority on blankets and stopping-out varnish and re-biting and burins and many other things.

Legros was too great a personality to have "Mr." tacked on to his name; Durham, on the other



hand, was not great enough, but Mr. Slinger was of a calibre which demanded that he should never be named without it. Never? Well—hardly ever. Sometimes a wild woman-student might allude to him as “Slingsby”—but that was a rare and flippant breach of etiquette.

The tiro began his career in “the antique.” With hard black chalk he had to attempt to depict David’s ear, or the mask of Dante, or the contortions of Laocoon, or the stately lines of Aphrodite. Hermes was there to baffle him, and Hercules to exhaust, and Discobolos was of the company, and many a nymph—both in relief and in the round.

If the tiro were overpowered by the subtlety of such forms, he could seek relaxation beside the skeleton, and gaily transfer to his Michelet paper ribs and vertebræ and pelvis. Or, he could fly to the *ecorché* and study the insertions of sartorius, or the graceful curves of gluteus.

The tiro worked all day with feverish energy, so as to be promoted to “the life.” The men’s life school was called the “lower life” because it was downstairs. The model sat every day in one pose for a week, but sometimes there were models in the late afternoons who took several different poses within an hour.

On the walls of the “lower life” were several large drawings of the nude which had been chosen by Legros as especially good work. Amongst them were drawings by Strang, Tuke, Holroyd, and J. B. Clark. Tuke had left before I reached “the

life," but the others were there, and I was to see a great deal of them in after years, and also of my contemporaries, Charles Furse and Harrington Mann; but there were many others who come back to my recollection and who now seem like curious figures in a dream.

There was the student who was psychic and reputed to spend his nights in the study of black magic. He apparently had the faculty of seeing a person surrounded by a variably coloured aura; and in his portraits, and even in his studies from the model, the aura was always put in with brilliant detail. No one ever dared to chaff him on this peculiarity, because he was an extremely fierce-looking individual. He was also very tall and powerful. No one ever even ventured to mention the aura when discussing one of his paintings—not even Legros. We were quite interested—and also curious—to see what colour was going to emanate from the image of any sitter that he might be portraying on his canvas, but it was not etiquette to talk about it.

Quite another type of student was the stout, middle-aged married man, who came for a few terms. His speciality was painting race-horses. He used often to say it was difficult to support a wife and a large family by painting cheap horse-portraits. He got over the difficulties of visualizing the subtleties of colour by a simple and ingenious plan. He made up a number of tubes of "horse-colour," as he called it. If he had to paint a bay

horse, or a bright chestnut, he took a tube of *bay* or *bright chestnut*, as the case might be, and also a tube of *horse high light* and doubtless executed his portrait with facility and dispatch.

Then there was the little red-haired Highlander who was never heard to speak under any circumstances. It was strongly suspected that he was dumb. One day it was reported during a "rest" that he was audibly talking to himself in the corridor. There was a silent rush of excited students who made their way down the corridor to a corner commanding the recess where Mac was pacing to and fro and repeating a monotonous refrain. It came clearly to the ears of the listeners, pronounced very slowly but firmly :

"Drawing-worrse-and-worrse-damn-it ! Drawing-worrse-and-worrse-damn-it !"

One of the students was colour-blind : not merely defective in his appreciation of colour, but unable to distinguish any difference between red and green. His paintings from the nude were therefore sometimes extremely curious, and if a rosy-mouthed model happened to be sitting, it was even betting that he would paint her with pea-green lips.

And I remember once a grim episode that occurred to one of our most earnest and popular leaders. He had been having private sittings from one of the regular "lower life" models for a picture which he intended to send to the Academy. This model was a fine-looking old Italian whom I

will call Luigi. Luigi suddenly disappeared. The student was in despair. His picture would be ruined unless Luigi could be found to complete the sittings. And apart from this, our friend had taken a great liking to old Luigi, and he was disturbed at being unable to get any news of him from the other Italian models.

One day the student arrived at the schools in great distress. An acquaintance of his—a medical student—had offered to show him the dissecting room. He had gone; and on a table he had found Luigi—or some of him.

Legros had a strong personality and great influence, and yet he seldom spoke. The highest praise he ever bestowed was, “*Pas mal !*” or, “*Continuez !*”

Twice or thrice in a term there would be a subject set for a “Composition.” This subject was usually taken from a Biblical or Classic source. The students evolved their compositions at home, and on a certain day Legros examined them all and criticized them. His dicta were terse and not without humour. He had a keen eye for a crib. I remember once, on a composition being handed to him, that he said, “*Les brébis sont copiées de Rafaele—cette figure de Leonardo—cette jambe de Michel Ange—le reste est original et sans mérite.*” And it was all quite true.

I only remember one occasion on which he used an English word. A student had depicted a Prophet with a very large nose and his arms crossed.

Legros laid a pencil obliquely on the Prophet's arms and merely said, "Punch." The laughter that greeted this remark was loud, for the Prophet had now become an unmistakable and indeed excellent likeness of Mr. Punch.

One of Legros' favourite remarks was, "*Il faut éviter de connaître les mauvais peintres.*"

He had a special admiration for the work of Andrea del Sarto, Leonardo, Pisano, Poussin, Ingres and Alfred Stevens.

Away from the Slade, Legros sometimes lost his severity and taciturnity, and became an amusing companion. Indeed, as a graphic narrator of any event that had amused him, he was inimitable.

It is impossible to write of Legros without recording two tales—chestnuts though they probably be to many of his former disciples.

He had been very friendly with Thibaudeau, the dealer in etchings, but they had a sudden and very violent quarrel. Legros was so upset that next day he determined to flee the town that harboured Thibaudeau, so taking train to Thames Ditton he sought to forget his quarrel in the quietude of a country walk. As he entered a narrow lane, a figure approached him from the other end. Nearer and nearer it approached. Oh, horror! It was Thibaudeau—Thibaudeau unable to endure a London where he might meet Legros.

Legros had a quick wit. An old friend—a French painter—was chaffing him on having been naturalized as an Englishman, and finished up by



shouting, “ *Mais qu'est-ce que vous avez gagné par vous faire faire Anglais ?* ”

“ *Gagné !* ” answered Legros, “ *Dame, j'ai gagné la bataille de Waterloo !* ”

This is surely the most brilliant of all brilliant flashes of repartee ! What simplicity ! What unexpectedness ! What truth ! Victor Hugo has written pages of such an eloquence as almost to convince the reader, to prove that Cambronne really won the battle of Waterloo, that if he did not win it for the moment he won it for all time ; but if a “ *mot* ” is to decide such matters, Wellington and Cambronne must alike be deposed. If ever I should be asked who won the battle of Waterloo, I would certainly reply without hesitation—“ *Legros.* ”

When Tissot the etcher challenged him to fight a duel, Legros gave him a very characteristic reply : “ *Je ne veut pas me battre—encore je n'ai pas le temps—et puis j'ai peur.* ”

To return to my budding artists, every year two scholarships were awarded which were each held for a duration of three years. The scholarships were only open to students who were under nineteen years of age. In '84 or '85 one of the scholarships was won by a girl-student who became my wife in '86. When we began to paint pictures the Royal Academy loomed very large on our horizon. George Gascoigne painted a picture, whilst at the Slade, which was not only hung in the R.A., but actually caricatured in *Punch*. This

we all, except perhaps one or two gloomy revolutionaries, looked upon as the height of fame. It was a fame that many of us enjoyed later on, but by that time it had ceased to be exciting.

The R.A. elections were also the subject of burning interest. Such interest also was soon to burn itself out.

Shortly after leaving the Slade, when we were married and settled in St. John's Wood, there was a very strong feeling among the young painters that the Academicians had stultified themselves by not bestowing the dignity of A.R.A. on either Swan or Sargent. Swan indeed had been treated with contumely, one of his pictures having been rejected and another skied.

Our blood boiled, and at a heated conclave it was agreed that each malcontent should seek out every R.A. of his acquaintance and extol the talents of John Sargent and John Swan. John Sargent, the man of vision and dexterous touch; John Swan, with his twinkling little eyes of jet and massive form topped with black shock of hair—humorous, indefatigable, inscrutable.

When the next Academy was about to be opened and varnishing day had arrived, I was walking through the rooms looking for my picture when Andrew Gow, one of the members of the Hanging Committee, came up to me and said:

“Well, I hope you are pleased with the way we've hung your friend Swan,” and, leading me up to the centre of a wall in Room V, he waved his

hand towards a picture of a lion's head, which was on the line. I gazed at it in consternation, for it bore not the slightest resemblance of our friend's work. It is true that a clearly legible signature announced that the painter's name was "Swan," but the initial was not "J." *It was by another Swan.* Gow, noticing my surprise, then asked, "Is there anything wrong? It is a Swan, isn't it?"

"Yes," I replied, "it apparently is a Swan, but not our own particular '*Rara avis in terris.*'"

"I see," said Gow, in his dry way, "'*Nigroque simillima cygno.*'"

I remember that in the same exhibition, in Room VIII, there was a picture hung, not precisely upside down, but half-way towards that position, the top and bottom being placed vertically. Nobody seemed to notice it; and indeed it did not greatly matter. Sending in pictures to the Academy had, when we were novices, all the excitement of a lottery. The first picture on which I built my hopes was one which had gained the summer landscape prize at the Slade. It was painted in Italy, and weeks of arduous care had been spent on it, but it was, to my present way of thinking, a wretched picture. Flushed with victory I had quite a different opinion of it then, and imagined it would surely be accepted.

Shortly before sending-in day, my brother was suddenly ordered to India to be A.D.C. to the Commander-in-Chief. Regretting that I had not

sooner thought of getting him to sit to me, I persuaded him to come in full kit to my studio. All the time he could give me was one sitting which was not to last longer than half an hour. Nothing daunted I procured a seven-foot canvas, and lashing a stick of charcoal on the middle joint of a fishing-rod, proceeded to sketch him in, life size. He was posed side-view with both his hands resting on his drawn sword, and wore a voluminous blue cloak with a scarlet lining. I finished it next day, putting in the cloak and boots in absolutely broad tones without any details, and sent it off along with the landscape to the Academy.

In due time I was surprised to learn that the landscape had been rejected, and the portrait of *An Aide-de-Camp* accepted.

On the night of the Soirée my wife and I went to Burlington House. It was our first appearance at this function. At the top of the staircase stood the President, Sir Frederick Leighton—a magnificent presence—

*“Hyperion’s curls; the front of Jove himself.”*

When our names were read out he raised his eyebrows saying, “Are you the painter of that portrait?” and at once struck the attitude of the Aide-de-Camp, throwing his head back and holding both his hands in front of him on an imaginary sword-hilt. Years afterwards Ernest Crofts, who had been on the Council that year, told me that *An Aide-de-Camp* had been unanimously rejected

by the Jury, but that Leighton had exercised a right which appertained to the President and insisted on it being brought back to the galleries and hung. It was very well placed in the big room.

Personally I was very lucky in the way my pictures were treated at the R.A. Frequently they found a place on the line, and sometimes in the centre of a wall; but in spite of this good luck, after the first few years of youthful enthusiasm it became very difficult to keep up an interest in the exhibitions at Burlington House. There was a fatal dullness about them as a whole. There were too many pictures by the bad old R.A.'s; too many by their sisters, their cousins and their aunts.

A dull conservatism in selection is perhaps inevitable when the rejection or acceptance of a work of art—or indeed of anything else—depends on the majority vote of a committee; but even so it was a pity, for the sake of the exhibitions, that the Jury did not select pictures from a wider field. They rejected everything that was new or original, and hung only that to which they were accustomed.

The bulk of the members pursued the same course in regard to their own pictures. They had discovered that a particular sample of their work attracted buyers. They continued, therefore, to produce samples as like the original success as possible. And some of them went on doing it for an incredibly long time.



One would paint a group of Greek maidens doing nothing in particular; another a sunset with salmon-coloured clouds; another a landscape that contained trees of a certain species; another a cow, and it was always the same sort of cow; another a young lady being unenergetic in an old-world garden—year after year they painted them! Time did not disturb the Greek maidens, nor darken the salmon-coloured clouds, nor kill the cow, nor even cause the young lady beside the sundial to alter the fashion of her frock.

The Academicians doubtless sold their wares, but if we try to find out in what way their energies encouraged Art, we must give it up and cry with Samuel Butler :

*“ O God ! O Montreal ! ”*

There were then, as there always have been, a few real artists who were members of the Royal Academy, but with these exceptions it was elsewhere that the most interesting and various phases of art existed—not always in accessible places. Several members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brethren were still to the fore. Whistler was—as Ruskin put it—flinging his paint-pot in the face of the British Public; Legros was severely adorning canvas and copper-plate, and Matthew Maris was beginning his experiments in nebulosity in a little room in St. John's Wood to which two, or at the most three, of his friends ever had the privilege of being admitted, for he was something of a hermit.

Impressionism was already in the air and there were vibrists to be found. All such freelances were ignored by the Royal Academy and the public. In Paris a similar mental attitude prevailed in matters of Art. Before going to the Slade I had often found myself there in the studios of friends who were painters or sculptors. Rodin was of the latter. He was almost as little known in France then as he was in England. The admirable Degas could hardly sell his pictures. Puvis was not regarded seriously as a painter by the ordinary exhibitor. His work indeed had been placed in the Pantheon and other Public Buildings, so he was not without effective admirers, but his aims and technique were to a strange degree unappreciated and scoffed at by the French painters we met in 1881. I fancy the reason was that there was too classical a grace about his figures; if he had painted realistic nudes from second-rate models all would have been well. Manet, whose canvases—so simple and yet so full of character—stood really in a class of their own, did not seem to excite to any special degree either the public or the bulk of the so-called artists. It seems to be a law of nature that when artists conglomerate the bulk of the conglomeration is always mediocre. The few bright spirits attracted by the conglomeration are unable to vivify the mass. It would appear, therefore, to be a mistake for artists to try to be gregarious; they should rather plough their lonely furrows or tilt at their own windmills,

To talk of the quality of the work turned out by the painters and sculptors in Victorian days is a temptation which verbally I could easily fall to, but for a painter to pose as a critic and record his opinions in print has always struck me as a particular ineptitude. I shall, therefore, leave their work alone and turn to the men.

They were a fine hard-working, bluff, cheery, hospitable set, those old R.A.'s. There were many very old men among them—venerable men with long white beards, and others who belonged to a still older generation to whom hair on the upper lip would have been un-English and unthinkable. It baffles my imagination to try to think of Sidney Cooper or Frith or Horsley innocent of the razor.

The two men who dominated the other members both in influence and personality were Leighton and Millais. They were as different in type from one another as they well could be. Leighton glowed with a certain splendour of address and self-confidence. He was broad-minded and sympathetic too, and probably as distinguished a President as had ruled the Academy since the days of Sir Joshua.

When in the course of time Leighton died and was to be buried in St. Paul's, many artists, myself among them, were there awaiting the ceremony which was to take place at twelve o'clock. The hour approached; it was on the stroke of noon and there was no sign of the cortège; it appeared as if the procession had been delayed; but as

the first stroke of the hour rang out the doors swung open and the coffin and its retinue appeared and had advanced into the Cathedral before the last stroke had sounded. Crofts, who was near me, leant close to my ear and whispered, "How like Leighton! Always punctual to a second!" He told me afterwards that Leighton had never been known to be late for a Council, and never arrived too soon. Sometimes when the hour of a Council meeting had begun to strike, some member would say, "Ah, ha! The President is going to be late this time!" but it was never so; before the clock had finished striking he always sailed in and attained the presidential chair.

Millais was a man who caught your eye in any crowd; he was indeed a glorified John Bull as portrayed by Tenniel in the cartoons of *Punch*—John Bull grown younger and taller and with better chiselled features. However people nowadays may laugh at the Victorians, there is one thing that may be said with confidence, and that is that they cannot now show such a fine-looking stamp of man as in those days. Amongst soldiers and painters and writers, and even amongst prelates and parliamentarians, there were scores of men of striking countenance—it would be easy to write out a long list of such. Nowadays, as regards men in the public eye, it seems to me that the list would be shorter.

The Hanging Committee grovelled before Millais' work; they would have hung fifty of his pictures

on the line if he had given them the opportunity—an old member told me so, with flashing eye, and I believe he meant it. The public also liked Millais, but, as usual, it was not his best work they liked. They cared little for what he did under the influence of the Pre-Raphaelites, or for his next phase when with vigour and certainty he gave free rein to his own ideas; what they liked was the picture of a child, the copyright of which was bought to form an advertisement to somebody's soap, or the portraits of people about whom they had read in the newspapers.

On my first varnishing-day, I was introduced to Hook, the sea painter, and he said, "Come along, I'll show you round!" His idea of showing me round was to lead me in turn to the pictures of all the other sea painters—Peter Graham and Brett and Colin Hunter—and pour out a stream of amazing invective, not unmixed with unparliamentary expression, on their work. As a rule painters did not retouch their canvases on varnishing-day, but I have seen a member, who imagined that his picture was killed by the one hung next to it, daubing cruder colours on to it that it might *hold its own*! It was as if a lady, who was going for a walk with a red-faced friend, were to rouge her cheeks for the occasion.

Competition with one's fellows and a regard for what will please the public may be excellent motives in commerce, but they are very bad ones in Art, at least in the arts of painting and sculpture; and



I think it was the absurdly high prices given by the rich middle-classes for the kind of picture they liked that seduced so many of the painters, and made them give the public what they wanted. The motto of Burlington House might have been "*As You Like It*," in the sense that Mr. Bernard Shaw instructs us to take it, with the accent on the "*you*."

Fortunately, for the good of their souls, there were also artists who were as devoid of greed as they were ignorant of the existence of a public. They carried their mode of life to an extreme. They wrestled from daybreak to dusk with their ideas and inspirations, and if they found nourishment for their spirits, they sometimes failed to find it for their bodies.

John Swan had often talked to me about Matthew Maris, whom he had known intimately when they had been in Paris together a few years previously. Maris was now living and working in a tiny room not a stone's throw from Swan's studio, but neither Maris nor his pictures—excepting a few examples of his early work which were in private collections—were ever to be seen, and I almost regarded Maris as a figment of Swan's imagination.

One morning, having been asked by Swan the previous day to do so, I went to see him; but the maid on opening the door of the house informed me that her master had given strict instructions that no one was to be admitted to the studio that day. "I think there is some mistake," I said,

“for Mr. Swan particularly asked me to come. Please go and ask him if he wishes to see me.” Next minute Swan appeared, huge and serious. “I wanted very much to talk to you to-day and to show you a new blue, but it is impossible,” said he, lowering his voice, “*Matthew is in the studio.*” He said this with as awestruck a solemnity as if Mark and Luke and John were also there.

“What an extraordinary thing!” I said. “How the deuce did that happen?”

“Well,” replied Swan, “he wanted to work on a bigger canvas than usual, and he hasn’t room for it in his place, so I brought him over here; but he would be flabbergasted at meeting anyone.” Then, after some moments of meditation, he went on, “Perhaps it could be managed. Look here, old man! Come along in, but *don’t look at him.* Don’t take any notice of him whatever. Do you follow me?”

“Quite,” said I, “I shall imagine he is a bit of furniture.”

“Yes,” said Swan, “that’s it—but don’t imagine he’s a new bit of furniture you haven’t seen before.”

As we went into the studio I saw two little legs and feet on a level with my eye; they were perched on a small model’s throne which had been placed on the top of a larger one. The upper part of the legs and the body which belonged to them were hidden by an easel holding a fairly large canvas. We went to the table where Swan had been making colours and chemical experi-

ments in reference to them, and we discussed the quality of blue in the tropics and in the Arctic circle and in many other conditions both in the heavens and on the earth, and at last a gentle voice from the height of its double throne wedged itself into our talk. Maris the colourist could not bear to be left out of such a discussion.

I could now look at him, and I saw a little man of almost dwarfish aspect, but with a benign and intelligent face from which descended a straight red beard. In his mouth was a slender pipe at least a foot in length with a very diminutive bowl, which often had to be refilled as he was a steady smoker.

Maris was a gentle innocent little man, who hardly belonged to this world. He had no desires, or one might almost say no needs, except to work on his canvases. His chief food was dried eels, which he received from Holland and which he cooked over his gas jet.

One day a wretched German, whom he had befriended and to whom he had given some small jobs to do, stole a gold watch and chain which had been presented to him by his painter friends in Paris. Maris, I believe, actually saw the fellow put the watch in his pocket, and the thief knew that Maris had seen him. Maris criticized the German's action, saying that it was not a nice thing to do and was very wrong. The amiable Teuton mumbled some incoherent words and went away—with the watch still in his pocket. Swan

was indignant when Maris told him of the incident and said that he ought to prosecute the thief. "Oh, no," said Matthew, "he is a very poor man and he likes the watch. Why shouldn't he have it?"

In 1871, during the street fighting in Paris, Maris was made to shoulder a rifle, which must have been about as long as himself, and was forced by the Communists to go to a barricade to "do his share" in the fighting; needless to say he was very careful not to fire off his rifle. Maris gave me a full account of the incident, and of his feelings at the time. This was the squarest peg in a round hole I ever heard of—he was probably the least combative man in Europe. I am sure Tolstoy in his latter years would have had a high regard for him.

Maris at the time I knew him had quite deserted the delicate and clearly detailed style in which he had achieved *Montmartre* and *The Young Cook*, and was painting massive women who looked like clouds; grey phantoms treated with the utmost breadth, in every sense of the word; mysterious figures that did not jump to the eye, but on examination they proved to be women of great amplitude and yet with something beautiful about them, in form as well as colour.

I never saw such a type of woman in real life, except perhaps once in Paris when I was in the studio of "young" Browning—so called to disquish him from his father the poet. A model was



GRANDS BATTEMENTS (SKETCH).





posing on the throne and Browning was working on the clay. The model was a girl who had lately come from Rome with a younger sister to try their fortunes in the Quartier. She was a "*winsome wench and walie*": that is to say, she was extraordinary massive and yet retained that beautiful line and proportion which is essentially Italian. Turgenieff, in one of his stories, describing two Russian peasant-women, says that such muscles had never been seen except in Michael Angelo's *Last Judgment*; but this girl reminded me more of his *Creation of Eve*. She was supposed to understand no English, so Browning started to talk about her and presently remarked:

"She has a curious peculiarity: sometimes she blushes, and literally blushes all over; it begins at her head and goes down."

He had hardly mentioned the fact, when the model, whose back was turned to us, blushed like a peony: her neck became suffused with colour which passed on to her shoulders and back, leaving her neck pale again; down went the blush at the rate of about two inches a second until it finally faded away at her ankles. It was the most comprehensive blush I ever saw. Its superficial area must have been enormous.

My experience of models, both professional and amateur, is that the more modest and virtuous they were, the less compunction they had in posing "for the nude"; and the converse was certainly the case. I remember an amusing instance of this

that happened to a painter with whom I was sharing a studio in 1882. He was travelling up to town, and in his compartment the only other passenger was a girl, with whom he soon got into conversation. She was of a curious type, which he could not quite place. She was garishly dressed, was untidy, and had a vulgar Cockney accent, but she was extremely good-looking, and he thought her head so paintable that, when the train was nearing Paddington, he asked her if she would do him the favour of giving him some sittings.

“Wot! Are you an artist?” she cried. “Nao! Not me! W’y you artists paint women with all their clo’es off, don’t yer?”

“Well, yes, sometimes,” assented my friend.

“Well, I think it’s shimeful!” continued the lady, “I wouldn’t do sich a thing—it’s not *nice*. Besides, it would interfere with business.”

“And what is your business?” he asked.

“Wot!” said she, “don’t yer know? W’y, I’m a ’arlot!”

Sometimes I found myself thrown for a brief spell into the company of such diverse characters as Fred Sandys, Watts, Burne-Jones, Whistler, or Oscar Wilde, but with these celebrities my acquaintance was far too slight for me now to say anything about them except a very few words. There was something to me very likeable about Whistler in spite of his being an exuberant *poseur*. In combativeness he was the antithesis of Maris, for his hand was against every man’s and his

rapier ever ready ; and yet there was something pathetic about him, which is difficult to express. He reminded me of some game little animal snarling at a circle of surrounding enemies, and continuing to snarl when they were dispersed, from force of habit.

The only time I ever met Watts was at his own house, where I found him surrounded by a court of ladies of various ages who hung upon his words and contemplated him as worshippers might contemplate an image ; they also all addressed him as Signor. Watts, his distinguished head surmounted by a black velvet skull-cap, took it all very seriously. He talked a great deal about pictures in an *ex cathedra* style. I don't think he had much sense of humour.

As for Oscar Wilde, I feel I owe him some gratitude for the amusement that the dialogue of his plays have given me, but, to be frank, his personality was more antipathetical to me than that of anyone else I ever met on this earth. I expect the colours of our auras clashed, for his mere presence in a room in which I might happen to be had the effect of making my hair bristle.

Of all the painters I ever knew Arthur Lemon is the one who lives most strongly in my memory. He was a philosopher with a pleasant wit, and that is to say that he was an exhilarating companion. He had travelled—had lived the life of a rancher in America, and of a painter in Italy and France and England, and wherever he had

been he had observed things with an unusually keen eye; he found time to read a good deal, too, so his brain was well stocked with knowledge of the most various subjects. He knew, for instance, more about a horse than many a vet or trainer, and had that instinct by which at a glance he could say how a horse was bred—what blood was there—what distant strain; and a remarkable thing about Lemon was that you never caught him tripping. Again, he was in touch with things of the sea and, when the spirit moved him, would intone a snatch of some half-forgotten sea song, some old fo'c'sle chanty that called up memories of a turning capstan. As an expert to consult when you were in a difficulty with your painting, or as a friend to advise what course to take when you were in a dilemma, he was without peer.

Although Lemon sailed serenely through life dotting his wake with humorous remarks, and although his work was his main object in life and he cared nothing for wealth or fame, it must not be supposed that he was in any way an ascetic—on the contrary, in his composition was a pleasant strain of the *gourmet*. At his table were always to be found little dishes such as you might expect to see at Bocca d'Arno, Grez, or Barbizon, but not in London or in Surrey. And they had lost none of their savour. Fiaschi of Italian wine were also there—the produce of some friend's vineyard. By English joints and vegetables he was not attracted. He laughed at English cooks for bring-



ing a leg of mutton up to that point when "something might be done with it," and serving it thus. His voice would shake with horrified amusement when he described a dish composed of "great watery slabs of cabbage."

Though Lemon was a tolerant observer of men and was always ready to discover some, perhaps unexpected, good trait in their characters, he had some pet aversions; for artists who were sham Bohemians, who pretended to be poverty-stricken, and who lived by choice in garrets, and broke up their chairs in winter to burn in their stoves for the renown of the thing and because Marcel and the other heroes had done it in Murger's *La Vie de Bohème*, he had a particular contempt. Unpleasant people, however successful, he simply ignored; but the sham Bohemian really annoyed him.

I remember one day discussing various national characteristics with him when he pointed out to me how a sense of "personal dignity" was an especial attribute of the French peasant. I had always admired the peasantry in France, or in those parts of France which I knew best, which was generally towards the west, but I could not have told why. Lemon's observation put the elusive quality into a nutshell. The French peasant, especially when living far from a town, is a very independent individual with good manners. *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité* are with him not mere aspirations—they represent very exactly his behaviour towards his fellows. He is not in the

least a democrat, either of the dull or bloodthirsty variety ; he does not scoff at or feel envious towards people either of title or of wealth ; he takes off his hat to them with precisely the same sweep, and sings out, " Bon jour, m'sieur ! " with the same gay tone of salutation as he does to a much-bepatched pedestrian striding along the road. And the peasant women are as free from snobbery as the men. There are parts of the Highlands and of some counties in England situated in the real country—away from the centres of lucre and grime—where the same independence and personal dignity can be found amongst the people, but what a pleasant world this would be if such an attitude were universal !

To sum up Lemon as I knew him, I should say his most salient qualities were his serene outlook on life and his unaffectedness. He would have been equally self-possessed in the company of princes or of cutthroats.

Sometimes of an evening he would bring his friend Bob Stevenson round with him. Bob Stevenson—known also as R. A. M. S.—was the cousin of R. L. S., now the more famous of the two ; but in the days when they were much together it was Bob who made the strongest impression on their associates, and for whom the greater achievement was predicted. Bob was amazingly good company. He was full of rich ideas which he could well express. Like Lemon he had a very independent point of view and could argue well

and amusingly on any subject, his brown eyes, set wide apart, glowing with a sort of inspiration.

At that time he was on the point of deserting the brush for the pen ; he had, in fact, already turned art critic, and some of his articles had appeared in one of the evening papers.

I have never seen the *raison d'être* of art criticisms. Even if art critics were all endowed with the power of writing undiluted truth about the merits or demerits of every work of art they looked at, I do not think that even then the world would be any happier, but they are not thus endowed, and if any innocent should still exist who imagines that critics are infallible, I should suggest to him that he should select any newspaper noted for its "sound art criticism" and look at its old files, forty or fifty or a hundred years back. He will there find that as a rule, seldom broken, the belauded pictures were painted by men whose names were hardly remembered twenty or thirty years afterwards, and the names that became famous in course of time were those of men who had been abused and laughed at, or altogether ignored, in the years when they first exhibited their pictures. However this may be, R. A. M. S., with his expert knowledge of painting and his picturesque ideas and his sympathy for struggling artists, was the man of all others who was fitted to shed lustre on the art of art criticism.

R. L. S. I never met, but I have read many of his stories with great pleasure ; I could never

quite forgive him, though, for the essay he wrote on Robert Burns. Purporting to be an answer to a *Life of Burns* in which the poet's character and actions were virulently assailed, it is stamped with the very same faults of assumed superiority which he set out to condemn. His defence of Burns might be summed up thus: "Poor fellow, it is of course impossible to overlook his deplorable faults and sins, but let me try to palliate some of them." But why harp on the poet's weaknesses and take up this attitude of a pitying Divinity? Burns was not the first great man who loved the lasses or who cracked a bottle! That he drank a good many more bottles than was good for his health, or was carried away by the attraction of more women than the unco' guid would approve is doubtless true. Burns was a man with strong human instincts, and resisting temptation was not his strong point; but he might have been something worse—he might have been a Puritan.

I think there must have been an inherent vein of pawkishness in R. L. S., which much to his credit he generally succeeded in entirely suppressing, but R. A. M. S. had too sympathetic and imaginative a nature to leave room for such a quality.

I remember one night there was a wild argument on revolution, and Charles Holroyd who was present took the line of glorifying Nihilism. An aunt of my wife's was staying with us—a dear religious old lady. She listened in silence during

the evening, but next morning at breakfast she asked in an awestruck whisper, "Who was the good-looking young man who advocated murder?"

Some years before the time of which I am writing I had occasionally met Gustave Doré. He was a gay little man who liked "going into Society." The rising generation of artists sneered at Doré, probably because they did not know his illustrative work, but only the engravings of his popular religious subjects. It was Daumier whom the young bloods swore by, and among contemporaries Steinlen, who was just beginning to make his mark. Doré was nevertheless sometimes a really great artist in black-and-white. A thorough workman, with an unusually splendid imagination. His best work was, I fancy, his earliest; at any rate the "religious phase," which so pleased the British public and doubtless made his fortune, was a shocking come-down for the man who had done those charming and admirable illustrations for the *Contes de Fées* and *Croquemitaine* and some of Balzac's books. Another genius whom they disparaged was John Leech—and that was unjust or stupid. If technically some of his drawing lacked certain qualities, who, I should like to know, ever presented a mirror of the Society of his time with more truth and delightful humour, or with a more complete inside knowledge of his subject? His *Sketches of Life and Character* remain to me one of the most realistic and amusing of volumes.



Another of the painters who flourished or struggled forty years ago was Stott of Oldham. He comes back to me very vividly with his high colour and stout figure, always attired in black frock-coat and trousers surmounted by clerically cut waistcoat and white tie: the precise replica—to look at—of a rubicund country parson. We thought him rather a preposterous person, but he was rather a genius. Although I have, to my regret, seen none of his paintings for many years, I can still clearly visualize some of his beautiful seascapes with their margins of foam. The mention of Stott's name always recalls to my mind an incident of his student days in Paris.

He was a great card in the pack of students who thronged the *atelier*, but one day an awful thing happened, which threatened to shake his prestige. A new student arrived whose name was Stott!

William Stott—for that was the name of our friend—was more taken aback than if the Devil himself had appeared and put up an easel beside him. However, he soon decided on his course of action. When the day's work was over he tackled the new-comer, whose name was Edward Stott, a mild youth with the suspicion of a stammer. "Look here," he said, "this'll never do. There *can't* be two Stotts! You must change your name!" After an astonished pause, Edward muttered, "All right," but as William strode away in triumph the new-comer rushed after him and

cried, "No, I can't, my sh-sh-shirts are marked!"

Of course this was an unanswerable argument, so the ingenious William got over the difficulty by bestowing on himself an urban title.

There are many other congenial or pleasant fellows I should like to write about, both painters and sculptors; some of them are tempting subjects whose names recall halcyon days of summer sketching and scores of amusing or picturesque incidents, but as they are still alive (and may they live happily for many a year!) it might be thought an impertinence to put their names into print. I shall make only one exception in regard to living friends, for I cannot resist the temptation of recounting Alfred Gilbert's reception of the Prince of Wales—the late King Edward.

He had received notice that the Prince was coming to his studio in Maida Vale to see *The Tomb of the Duke of Clarence*, which was nearing completion. About half an hour before the Prince was due to arrive, Gilbert was working with energy in his shirt-sleeves on one of the unfinished figures, when suddenly His Royal Highness was announced. Feeling that his costume was not complete enough in which to receive Royalty, and his eye falling on his top hat which happened to be at hand, he seized it and jammed it on his head at the moment the Prince was advancing towards him.

After the Prince had shaken hands with him, the enormity of the disrespectful act he had committed suddenly occurred to Gilbert and his hand

went up to remove the offending hat, but the Prince stopped him forcibly, crying, "No, no, Mr. Gilbert, I insist on your keeping your hat on!" So the coatless and embarrassed Gilbert had to keep his hat on whilst every one else was bareheaded. To appreciate the comicality of the situation one should know Gilbert and have known his hat, which was large and curly and doubtless designed by himself.

Another sculptor, of a different type, was Harry Bates. I do not think it is encroaching on the preserves of the art critic to say that he was a very good sculptor, and he was also a very good fellow. Everybody liked Bates. He was young and sturdy, endued with tremendous energy, and he also dropped his "h's" with uncompromising thoroughness. Nobody minded; it was his way. He sometimes also picked up an "h" and put it where it should not be. As Charles Furse once said, "Jolly fellow, Harry Bates! He will pick up an 'h' anywhere—on the harm of a chair even!"

One day he sent me an urgent message asking me to come round to his studio. I went round and found that he wished to discuss some panels he was making for the base of an equestrian statue. On the front panel there were lancers, on the side panels there were to be Highlanders and Gurkhas, and he could not make up his mind how to dispose them.

"I don't want," he said, "to 'ave only Gurkhas on one panel and 'Ighlanders on the other. 'Ow

would it be to 'ave Gurkhas up to 'ere, and then a few 'Ighlanders?" and, conscious that his "h's" were deficient, he corrected himself with a desperate effort—"I *should* say 'Ighl-handers!"

One day my wife's studio door was opened and Bates was announced. Next moment he rushed into the studio in an excited manner and cried, "Congratulate me, Mrs. 'Amilton! My wife has just presented me with a son *and a hare!*"

## XV

### A LITERARY ENVOY

I have more than once read in newspapers that Rudyard Kipling had an immediate success as an author.

If this means that the public made no delay in appreciating the work of a robust and original writer it may very well be true, but if it means that Kipling suffered none of the delays which genius has so often endured, and that his work was appreciated by editors and *literati* at first sight, then it is a statement which requires some dilution.

Kipling occupies such a high place on the roll of famous authors that I think the following little tale should be recorded as a matter of historical interest.

In 1886 I received a letter from my brother, who was then in India, saying that he had seen a good deal of a young fellow called Rudyard Kipling, who had a pretty talent for writing and was anxious to publish something in England. Ian went on to say that he had advised the budding author to send whatever MS. he might select to me in order that I might show it to Andrew



Lang and William Sharp, with both of whom I was well acquainted.

Soon the MS. of a story arrived and with it simple instructions that I was to show it first to the two authors above named, and then to the editors of two magazines, the names of which were also stated, and to report the results.

Andrew Lang I had known since 1866, when I was a schoolboy at Loretto. He had come there in the summer term to read with our Headmaster, Hely Hutchinson Almond. At Loretto we had the good luck to have as a fencing-master the famous Captain Roland—a swordsman of European reputation. Lang was a keen fencer, or perhaps it would be more correct to say that he was very keen on the subject of fencing and all that appertained to it; and it was at this little fencing class that our acquaintance began.

Kipling's MS. was duly sent off to Lang. It was soon returned and with it a very strong letter of condemnation. At the outset Lang recorded that he would willingly have paid Ian "a fiver" if thereby he could have prevented the MS. from leaving India.

The story had apparently given him a sleepless night.

His further remarks were not at all suggestive that a literary career would be an appropriate or promising one for the young author.

It is only fair to say that some years later Lang

changed his view of Kipling as a writer, and extolled his work with both voice and pen.

Lang's verdict was so uncompromising that I thought the chances that Sharp would think favourably of the MS. were greatly increased; for it would have been difficult to find two men more different in their tastes and points of view. I, therefore, sent the story to Sharp with some confidence that it would appeal to him.

To my surprise he returned it with even more ferocious criticisms—if they can so be called—than had been expressed by Lang. He wound up his letter by saying that he had a curiously distinct *flair* that the writer of the MS. would go mad before he reached the age of thirty.

The story at any rate had made an impression on him.

The MS. continued its travels. It visited in turn the editors of the two magazines, but these gentlemen very quickly turned out the little stranger, and with a kick and a bray sent him flying back to me.

I began to be nettled. At first, to the best of my recollection, I had been only mildly interested in the adventures of the MS., but the rebuffs, which had been flung at what appeared to be a strong and original little story, irritated and also puzzled me.

I decided, before returning the MS. to India, to read it out to a selected audience of young painters just to see what impression it would make

on them. My audience consisted of my wife, two or three other ladies, and my old fellow-students, Holroyd, Furse, and Strang. Their names were unknown to the general public then, but in course of time each of them made his mark—Sir Charles Holroyd as Director of the National Gallery, Charles Furse as a brilliant painter, and William Strang as an etcher. Strang indeed was a mass of energy who worked with equal thoroughness on copper, paper, canvas, or wood. They all possessed liveliness of imagination and independence of view, so they were a good audience for such a test as I proposed.

The reading took place one night in my studio, and the outcome was that the story was greeted with enthusiastic appreciation by the whole company. It was agreed that there was a strong flavour of the horrible in the tale, but our literary taste was not thin-skinned and this flavour did not prevent the company from admiring the originality of the theme and the style in which it was narrated.

The MS. then went back to India.

For a few years nothing more was heard of it, and then suddenly it appeared again in England—this time in the full light of publicity, for it formed one of several short stories in a volume which had an instant success. The original story had not been altered, but it had been given a new title—THE MARK OF THE BEAST.

## XVI

### SRINAGAR

Whilst we were at Simla in '89, Ian made a plan for an expedition into Kashmir.

His plan was to go in on the 15th of October, which is the date on which all officers on leave in Kashmir must return to India. How he managed to arrange that date I do not precisely know; but as he held a rather independent post as A.A.G. of Musketry, he probably gave himself leave.

Our party consisted of Jean, L., Ian and myself, and we were delighted with the idea of going into a beautiful country away from white men and women and social conventions, where we could live a natural life, unfettered by collars or boots or any other of the unsatisfying luxuries of civilization.

In those days the tonga road, which was in course of construction, went only some two or three marches beyond Murree to a place, I think, called Chakuti; after that there were only rough tracks through the mountains south of the gorge of the Jhelum.

We were in very light marching order with only a small retinue; the cook, the *khidmatgar*,

and a few hillmen to carry our tents, our rifles, and a lady's saddle : the idea being that we should from time to time hire a pony which the ladies should ride alternately. There was also a maker of grass sandals, whose whole time was occupied in twisting ropes of grass and fashioning them into the best of all footwear. We had no spare kit to speak of ; perhaps an extra shirt and possibly an extra pair of puttis ; there were no doubt some handkerchiefs, but our baggage certainly did not contain a collar or a pair of socks. Neither was there a hat, for we wore puggaris.

In order to make our marches into the country with rapidity and thus gain more time for our stay on the shooting-ground, it had been planned that the ladies and I should start a day in advance of Ian and aim at doing a double-march in each twenty-four hours. Ian was to follow on relays of ponies and cover a distance of three marches each day. He was thus due to overtake us on the third evening. We managed to work faithfully to our plan, but it was very nearly frustrated by a catastrophe.

Soon after daybreak on his second day, Ian arrived at a place where the track zigzagged along precipitous ground ; to the right and above were walls of rock, and to the left the gorge of the Jhelum, whose pale green waters could be seen thousands of feet below. On turning a corner sharply to his right he saw before him a narrow chasm through which a mountain torrent dashed down to join



its waters to the big river. The chasm was spanned by a rough and narrow bridge formed of long logs, with a protective rail on each side.

We had passed over this bridge the previous day and had been struck by the wild appearance and gloomy depth of the chasm.

When Ian was half-way across, there suddenly ran on to the bridge from the other side a bull with gaily coloured ribbons tied to its horns, and behind it appeared a herd of cattle. It was practically impossible to turn back, so he shoved his pony along hoping to squeeze past the bull or drive it back to the far side. But it was not to be done, and next moment he and his pony and the bull were jammed together between the hand-rails. The bridge swayed, the logs creaked, and the bull snorted. The pressure became more violent and the situation more desperate. It was clear that something decisive must happen soon. And suddenly it did. With a terrific crash one of the rails gave way and the gaily decorated bull whirled into the abyss.

The rest of the herd had paused at the bridge-head, so Ian was able to complete the crossing without difficulty. The herdsman took the loss of the bull philosophically. He gazed into the chasm and the only word he said was, "Kismet."

There were few villages or people to be seen in the mountainous parts of Kashmir, but one day we passed a small village from which the headman came to meet us bearing in his hands two earthen-

ware plates, one of which had been inverted so as to form a lid. The edges had been sealed with clay. When the seal was broken and the lid removed bunches of luscious white grapes were revealed. They were narrow grapes and very long and their flavour was exquisite. Such grapes I had never before tasted.

Once we met a man who had a silver nose. It was a fine large nose and it gleamed in the sunlight. It transpired that his original nose had been bitten or clawed off by a bear, and the Rajah on hearing of it had given him this silver replica.

And one day we met a tax collector. He rode a fine grey Persian and wore scarlet puttis and a tunic of the colour which Pathans call *pachta*. His puggari was blue and gold. Why should not the British tax collector be thus attired? Arrayed in scarlet trousers and dove-coloured coat, and a blue-and-gold hat, perhaps we might be able to elude him.

After a couple of days marching through high ground, sometimes open, sometimes covered with pine forest, we came to a spot from which we could see the Wular Lake. At our feet, where the Jhelum flows from the lake, lay Baramulla surrounded by small hills of every shade of scarlet and crimson. Directly across the lake were forests and mountainous ranges, and beyond them far towards the north two snowy peaks, one clear and glowing, the other faint from its extreme distance, but nevertheless an impressive pyramid

of snow. Away to the right stretched the great lake until it was lost in mists and meadows, and the sky was broken by the delicate outlines of hills which were the colour of amethysts ; in that direction lay Srinagar.

As may be imagined, the extraordinary beauty of the landscape with its unique and brilliant effects was a great temptation to a painter. I would willingly have camped there for a month and painted furiously the whole time, but we had planned that our holiday was to be one of travel and sport and that sketching was to be taboo. I stuck to this idea fairly well, but later on, when we got to the high ground, I could not resist making some studies which I used some years after when painting *The Shot at Daybreak*. The picture represents a stalker preparing to have a shot at an ibex below him. The ground is so precipitous that it would have been impossible to fire over the rock-edge unless the *shikari* had been there to hold on to his grass-shoes. I have more than once found myself in a very similar position.

As we wished to get our boats and embark before dark, we pushed on and soon arrived at Baramulla, secured two boats, one for ourselves and another for the cook and our men, and pushed off.

Here was luxury indeed ! A super-gondola gliding over the smooth lake urged on by a sturdy crew of paddlers, and within easy hail of our floating kitchen where the cook was preparing his unrivalled curry and chicken cutlets.



THE SHOT AT DAYBREAK. KASHMIR.





Sprawling on our *resais* in the stern we felt that here was the real luxury, not only the joy of living amidst such a scene of splendour, but the joy of freedom, the joy of *escaping* from the dull cares of the Sahib-log, from letters and newspapers and intrigues and gossip and white shirts and dinner parties—yes, above all from dinner parties.

As we lay in this happy frame of mind there appeared, rounding a point and coming towards us, a much larger craft than ours. She was manned by a crew of forty paddlers all clad in scarlet. Their paddles struck the water in rhythmic unison. As she neared us a horrible foreboding enveloped my mind that a disturbing influence was approaching, and that our freedom was in peril. My foreboding was soon realized. We learned by word of mouth and letter that the Resident had heard—Heaven knows by what means—that we were entering Kashmir, and had sent his own barge to meet us and convey us to Srinagar, where we were invited to stay at the Residency. It was vastly polite of the Resident—it was more, it was charming and hospitable; but to us, in the act of escaping from the Sahib-log, the kindness of the Resident came like a mental bomb. Our high spirits were shattered, squashed, annihilated.

“Well,” said Ian, “there’s nothing for it. We shall have to tranship. Damn! Damn! Damn!”

“I can’t do it,” I groaned. “Why should we allow our plans to be upset? Let us explain that it is impossible for us to go to Srinagar.”

“Futile,” responded Ian, “of course we must go to Srinagar. Srinagar is on our way, and, anyhow, we are to meet our *shikaris* there. No, no! It is the very Devil, but there is no way out of it.”

I think the ladies were as horrified at the idea of being guests at the Residency as we were—their wardrobe was scanty and peculiar.

In vain we lay writhing on our *resais* trying to find some way of escape from our doom, but it was no good. There was an authority in the courteous message of the Resident which was too strong to be flouted. There was no way out of it. With sad hearts we transhipped to the gorgeous barge, and when night fell sleep brought us a respite from our misery.

When the sun rose we were near Srinagar. The lake had narrowed down to a river, and astern of us on either hand lay flower-bedecked meadows, the veriest Elysian Fields. Here and there a great chenaar tree stood gorgeous in the still morning glow. Beyond were the rounded forms of the amethystine hills. Ahead of us appeared many fantastic bridges, and picturesque houses rising sheer from the river and the canals which intersect the town. Silently gliding past this ever-varying panorama the barge at length approached a wide flight of steps rising to a great gate which pierced the wall of what seemed to be a garden, for tree-tops and flower-laden sprays appeared in profusion above its coping.

As the barge reached the bottom of the steps the gate was flung open and the Resident himself appeared in the gateway. Behind him were the flowers of a garden, on either hand brilliantly attired attendants, but the Resident was in every sense the centre of the picture. His stout figure was clothed in a frock-coat and subdued but admirably cut trousers, patent-leather boots, high collar and sombre tie, and a very large white waistcoat ; his crowning glory was a top hat, a well-brushed hat which gleamed in the early morning light—a *chapeau à huit reflets*. Greeting us with a cordiality which almost obliterated condescension, he led us through the garden to the Residency and directed that we should be shown to our rooms.

We had gathered on our walk through the garden that we had arrived at a good moment, as there was just time to wash and change (!) before breakfast. We also gathered that it was Sunday, which was news to us, as we had not kept count of the days.

We were conducted up a staircase into a maze of wide passages, running at curious angles. Floors, walls and ceilings were all of light-coloured wood exquisitely wrought in patterns. Ian was the first to be shown his room, but wishing to know where the rest of our party were to be installed, he followed us and noted the positions of our rooms.

I was sitting on a sofa in the middle of a large and splendidly furnished room, despondently gazing

at my spare shirt and the few other articles in my baggage, when the door opened and Ian appeared looking annoyed as well as dishevelled.

"I'm blessed if I can find my room now," he said. "Do you think you know which it is?"

"Yes, I think so," I replied.

"Well, do come on and show me. I *think* I know it, but these confounded doors are so alike that I can't swear to it."

I followed him, and we got to a space where several passages joined and there were doors all round. I pointed across the parquet to a door and said, "I *think* it is that one."

"Yes," said Ian, "that's the one I thought it was."

As he advanced towards it, I returned to my room. Next moment my door was flung open and Ian again entered the room. Although he was pretty well sunburnt I noticed that he was pale.

"Well, I've done it now!" he groaned. "I opened the infernal door you said was mine and walked in, and there was a lady stepping into her bath with a sponge in her hand. What a *début* to make here!"

I made the remark that the search for his room would now be more easy as he knew one door to avoid.

Ian was not gone long, when he returned with anger and perplexity in his eye.

"The doors here are certainly bewitched," he said. "I am not even sure which door it was I

opened just now. Just come along again and show me the door you showed me before."

We started out together into the maze of passages. I have generally a good sense of direction; but there was something particularly confusing in the design of the passages which came together in the vicinity of Ian's room, and I did not feel an absolute confidence in pointing out the door to be avoided.

"Well," I said, "I won't quite take my oath to it, but I will lay some odds that *that* is the door we agreed was yours, and which consequently is the door of the lady with the sponge."

"Yes, I think so too," said Ian, "I will try the next one."

I did not wait to see the result, but turned and strode off to my room. I had hardly got there when Ian burst in and flung himself into an arm-chair.

"The Devil is in it!" he cried; "the same old wrong room again!—and the same lady stepping *out* of her bath this time—she still had the sponge in her hand. It is too awful! For all I know she may be our hostess! What will she think of me rushing in twice at such a moment—*twice* by gad! We are ab-so-lute-ly disgraced! This is the last straw!"

Ian shrivelled up in his beautiful arm-chair, and I shrivelled up on my gorgeous sofa, and I cursed the unknown man who had told the Resident we were entering Kashmir.

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*



Things sometimes look blackest before the dawn, and so it proved on this occasion. In a surprisingly short time our troubles rolled away and all was well.

To begin with, Ian fortunately managed to abstain from walking a third time into the room of the lady with the sponge, and when we were conducted to the breakfast-room and introduced to our hostess he was delighted to find that she bore no resemblance to the aforesaid lady, which happy news he conveyed to us at the first opportunity.

Different as the kind of life that was now thrust upon us might be from the life we had been planning, I am bound to say that it was a very pleasant one. We were treated with splendid hospitality. The absence of collars or, indeed, of all the garments usually worn in polite society, seemed not to offend our host and hostess, who even suggested that our Kashmiri stalking kit was *chic* and more appropriate to Srinagar than the more conventional dress of the other guests; we were thus at once put at our ease.

Amongst the guests was the Member for Agriculture on the Indian Council. He was an old friend of Ian and Jean. L. and I had also previously met him at Simla. He was famous as being "the most absent-minded man in India." He lived up to his reputation and his lapses were a source of hilarity. There were other guests, but I have only a hazy recollection of them; one was a

globe-trotting English Baronet; another the lady who has been sketchily alluded to.

On our excursions we always went about by boat, generally to view the beauties of river and lake, and to partake of *al-fresco* banquets. There was a luxury surrounding these glorified picnics on the velvety turf and in the balmy air of Kashmir which cannot be imagined by such as have not wandered in the East.

One day we spent in exploring the town and visiting the shops of the merchants, where we bought cloth and shawls and embroideries and Bokhara Suzannis. Making a purchase at Srinagar entails sitting down and drinking coffee with the merchant, the while a long and courteous and mendacious haggles is carried on. The cunning of the Sahib is much—oh, much—inferior to that of the merchant, but he is probably well satisfied with his bargain, so every one is happy.

But the picnic was the thing! Through rivers and lagoons to lakes bordered with lotos and iris—little lakes where beyond the lotos fringe abruptly rose the emerald turf in undulating hillocks to be crowned by the ruins of some temple. One, I remember, had been built of black marble and embedded in the turf around it lay great stray marble blocks, and it was towards these that our attendants, clad in scarlet and gold, or dazzling white, bore their baskets of cunningly cooked meats, and great fruits, and bunches of the long Kabuli grape, and flagons of Kashmiri wine,

When the moment of departure arrived, it was almost with regret that we took the road, and marched to the north in search of our nullah and the life of the camp.

## XVII

### THE CHAPLAIN

A curious thing happened on our voyage back from India in '90.

We sailed from Bombay in a small P. & O. liner, and transhipped on to a larger vessel at Aden. She had come from Australia, and was crowded with passengers. In the dining-saloon, instead of the usual long tables running fore and aft, there were many little tables, at each of which there were eight places. L. and I and two other passengers from India were allotted places on one side of a table, and on the other side were four passengers who had made the voyage from Australia.

My *vis-à-vis* was a rubicund cleric, a good *con-teur*, brimming over with information on any subject that might come under discussion, and it was doubtless his personality that made our parties at lunch and dinner so merry. He was always referred to as "The Chaplain."

One day at dinner he had been giving us short histories of some of our fellow-passengers, when some one asked him who the old man was who carried a notebook in which he was continually writing.

“That,” replied the Chaplain, “is Mr. Brown. Many years ago he was a sheep-farmer in Queensland, but was unsuccessful, and came to Sydney where he started such and such a business and gradually built up a large fortune. He is now practically a monomaniac; his idiosyncrasy is to find out everything he can about everybody on board, no matter how trivial or uninteresting, and enter it in his notebook. I believe he has got the name and address and destination of every one on board in that notebook”—and with a chuckle the Chaplain added—“except mine!”

After dinner I asked several Australians what the name of the Chaplain was and where he came from, but no one knew—the only explanation of his anonymity I could get was that it was believed he had concealed his name in order that he should not be called upon to hold services on Sundays. This did not seem to be a very plausible explanation, but anyhow the fact remained that nobody on board—except no doubt the Captain and the Purser—knew his name.

Next day at lunch I addressed the Chaplain: “I have an idea, sir, which may lead to some fun; I propose to tell Mr. Brown that I have discovered your name and that it is so and so—I will invent a good name for you—he will be overjoyed, and will enter it in his book. The other members of our party will then from time to time also inform him of your name, but each time it will be a different one!”



Very small jests amuse people on board ship, and my scheme of confusing the inquisitive Mr. Brown was hailed with laughter and applause ; and nobody was more delighted with the idea than the Chaplain. Chuckling with merriment he cried, " Yes, and what name are you going to start with ? Macdonald would be a good name, I think ! "

" Oh, no, that won't do at all," I said. " Macdonald doesn't suit you in the least, sir ! No, no, I shall tell him your name is Turner. "

" No, no," rejoined the Chaplain, " that is not the sort of name for me. Turner won't do ! "

" Indeed it will," I replied. " Turner is an excellent name, and anyhow you are going to be Turner to-day whether you like it or not ! "

The Chaplain made a few more efforts to protest against the name I had selected for him, but his efforts only increased my obstinacy, and the conversation soon turned to other topics.

During the afternoon I had occasion to go down to my cabin to fetch something or other. As I got to the door my steward ran up and said, " A gentleman has been to call on you, sir, and has left his card. " I opened the door, and the steward pointed to the card which he had placed on my bunk. With some surprise I picked it up and read :

THE REVEREND CHARLES TURNER.

H.M. Prisons Service.

## XVIII

### EYE-WITNESSES

#### I

#### THE GREEN JACKET

A year or two after the Afghan War, when I was thinking of taking up painting as a profession, Sir Frederick Roberts one day gave me such a vivid description of the early morning scene when the Peiwar Kotal was attacked, of the mountain peaks seen through the deodars, of the enemy's smouldering camp-fires, and of the 72nd Highlanders and 5th Gurkhas climbing the steep ascent, that I said, "By Jove, sir, I would like to paint that some day when I am a full-fledged painter!"

"Why not?" said he, "when the time arrives come out to India, and if you can't get to the actual Peiwar Kotal, I will show you a place in the hills near Simla which is exactly like it, and we can get you Gurkhas or anyone else in their proper kit and reproduce the whole scene for you."

"Well, I won't forget," I replied, "and if it can possibly be arranged you'll see me there some day."

A few years afterwards, when Sir Frederick was Commander-in-Chief, I found myself in India



THE ATTACK ON THE PEIWAR KOTAL.



painting studies of the place that was "exactly like" the Peiwar Kotal. Sir Frederick took a great interest in the beginnings of the picture and caused a typical rifleman of the 5th Gurkhas to be sent up to Simla to act as model. He was a sturdy little warrior of the "bullet-headed" type. To make sure that his kit and accoutrements were exactly as worn on the day of the action, two staff officers who had been present at the attack were sent to inspect him before I began work. They examined him with great deliberation: there seemed to be not a square inch of his khaki tunic with its black buttons, of his accoutrements and kukri and water-bottle and indeed of his whole surface, including his face, which they did not scrutinize with penetrating gaze. They declared themselves satisfied—there was nothing wrong. His kit was exactly as the Regiment had worn it at the Peiwar Kotal.

I worked hard at my little Gurkha for some weeks on the mountain-side among the deodars, and then one day I heard that a subaltern in the Regiment, who had been in the attack, had come up to Simla and wished to see the studies. I sent him a message that I should be delighted to see him at any time, and he soon appeared.

He was a good type of soldier, lean and tanned and rather silent. He looked at all the studies and appeared to approve of them. We then talked of the action, and I hoped he might reveal some incident or detail which could be worked



into the picture, but his remarks were abrupt and contained no information until suddenly he asked :

“ Why have you done him in khaki ? ”

“ Well,” I replied, “ that’s how he was. Kit’s not my department. He was inspected and approved by Colonel Blank and Captain Dash who were in the action, so I never questioned there could be anything wrong about the khaki.”

“ It is wrong,” said he, “ we were in green.”

“ Are you sure ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ How is it, then, that every one up here thinks you were in khaki ? Sir Frederick himself, who has a mighty good memory ? ”

“ Because we went into khaki a few days after the action and fought the rest of the campaign in it.”

Having given vent to this unusual torrent of verbosity, the subaltern departed.

I at once told Sir Frederick of the subaltern’s information ; for a moment he was taken aback, but then said, “ Yes, I believe he is right, but anyhow we’ll write to the Regiment and find out definitely at what date they got into khaki.”

Some days afterwards letters arrived from the Colonel and the Adjutant of the Regiment. The Colonel’s letter confirmed the criticism of the subaltern, and gave the date—a week or so after the attack on the Peiwar Kotal—on which the Regiment had gone into khaki. The Adjutant’s

letter, which was addressed to me, contained coloured illustrations and complete details of the kit worn at the Peiwar Kotal—rifle-green uniform, black puttis and accoutrements and black cap with its badge of crossed kukris and the Regimental number 5. A postscript to the letter informed me that the actual kit was being sent to me, and in due course it arrived.

This question was therefore settled beyond any possibility of dispute.

Some years afterwards, and after the picture had been painted and exhibited at the Royal Academy and at the Salon, the Committee of a military exhibition in London asked me to let them include it in their exhibition. I readily consented.

On going down one day to see where they had hung it, I was cordially received by one of the chief members of the Committee, a General, well known to me by name, as he had commanded a Brigade in the very action depicted on my canvas. He was perhaps almost as well known as an amateur artist as a soldier: at any rate he turned out a prodigious number of sketches, which were highly thought of in India.

“That’s a very fine picture of yours,” he said, “and we’re very glad to have it; but I must own that to me it has a great defect. The Gurkhas ought to be in khaki; you’ve painted them in parade kit!”

I groaned inwardly at the thought of reviving an old argument which ought to have been dead

and buried for all time, so merely remarked that I had done what I could to get the best evidence as to the details of the picture.

“Ah, what a pity you didn’t ask *me* about it!” he exclaimed. “I could have given you the *best* evidence! A sketch of the 5th Gurkhas in action on the Peiwar Kotal, *done on the spot*. Come and see it!”

He led me into a room filled with water-colour sketches and pointed with some pride to a water-colour drawing representing little men in khaki chasing big men in pushteens.

“There you are,” said the General, “you can’t have better evidence than *that*—it was painted on the spot!”

I did not say anything, but I decided in my mind that a sketch done *on the spot* was no evidence unless it were also done *at the time*.

## II

### THE BUTTON

I have always had a strong aversion to going to see places and things which convention declares it is a duty to see. Chamfort must have been of the same mind when he wrote: “*Il y a à parier, que toute idée publique, toute convention reçue, est une sottise, car elle a convenue au plus grand nombre.*” At first glance this may seem rather a violent attack on the public taste, but on reflection it

appears to be so logical as to become almost a commonplace. The conventional distractions of the mediocre—that is to say, of the many—must obviously be mediocre. Therefore, to follow the crowd is generally a sure way to arrive at something not worth arriving at. I am glad, however, that I once made an exception to this rule.

When the Gurkha studies were completed, Sir Frederick asked me what our plans were for the next few months. I explained that we were engaged to be at Kapurthala at a certain date; that we had planned to go on a shooting trip into Kashmir for so many weeks, and that I wanted to go to Delhi to make some sketches of the Kashmir Gate.

“But you are going to see the Taj?” he cried. “You *must* see the Taj—look here, I leave our camp at Lahore on such-and-such a date, and am due at Agra on Saturday the —th (naming a date three or four months ahead). You and Mrs. Vereker will join us at Agra—we will see the Taj by moonlight—we will then board my train and have supper, and arrive at Delhi next morning. If the Bishop of Lahore is there I shall stop all day. I shall go to hear him preach, and after tiffin I shall take you round and show you all the places where the fighting took place.”

It required no urging to accept such a delightful and comprehensive invitation. My programme of work in India included studies of the battle-field at Delhi, and here was an opportunity of beginning

work under the guidance of one who had taken part in that famous siege.

I had known a good many of the men who fought at Delhi, amongst them that splendid old soldier, Sir Charles Reid, who commanded the Sirmoor Battalion throughout the siege. His personal encounter with the sepoys and his staunchness and gallantry would form a fit subject for an epic. In the days when I knew him he was an old dandy; his whiskers a glossy—perhaps a too glossy—black; his figure still slim and youthful. Wagging tongues said he wore stays—what matter! A more genial, kindly man did not take the air in Pall Mall. He had been frequently wounded and had lost a bit from the crown of his skull, which was trepanned with a plate of gold. And thereby hangs a tale. One autumn he came to stay with Captain Harry Brooke in Aberdeenshire for some shooting, and Brooke, who had brought over from Ireland a favourite gillie called Micky, selected him to act as henchman to Sir Charles. Micky and Sir Charles got on famously together, and when the day arrived for the latter to depart, he sent for Micky and said, “Now, Micky, I want to give you a present—name anything you want and, if it is in my power to get it for you, you shall have it!”

“Ah, no, your Honour!” said Micky, “I wouldn’t be asking you for annything.”

“Oh, yes! I’m sure if you think it over you’ll find something you want.”



“ Well,” says Micky, “ there’s just wan thing in the world I want, but I wouldn’t be asking your Honour for such a grand thing ! ”

“ Go on,” cried Sir Charles, “ ask away ! ”

“ Well, your Honour—would you let me have a look at your golden crown ? ”

I heard this story from Brooke and also from Sir Charles, I am only sorry that I did not hear Micky’s version as well.

In due course of time, at the appointed *minute*, we met Sir Frederick and his staff at Agra.

The Taj by day is a wonderful thing to see, but the Taj gleaming in the light of a full moon, and reflected in the long narrow lake beneath it, is a vision of inexpressible beauty which I still see clearly in my mind’s eye.

Next morning when we awoke we found that our little train had been run into a siding and Sikh sentries were on guard. Early as it was Sir Frederick was pacing up and down in conversation with the General in command at Delhi.

In the afternoon, according to his promise, he took us at a rapid pace over much of the ground where the fighting had taken place, but now and then stopped to point out the precise spot where some exciting, or gallant, or tragic, or perhaps serio-comic incident had occurred.

The exterior of the Kashmir Gate was the part of the fortification which especially interested me, as I wished to paint that great moment when the sappers, having blown in the Gate—sacrificing

many of their own lives in so doing—the storming party of the 52nd dashed from the covered-way across the ditch into the breach.

When we reached the Gate we found it to be in very much the same condition as it had been at the time of the siege, the massive brickwork was penetrated or shattered in many places, and here and there round shot were still to be seen embedded in the masonry; the covered-way and counterscarp and berme were intact, and the only difference was that a new wooden bridge had been built across the ditch, and the woodwork in the centre of the Gate—which is a huge and lofty structure—had been repaired.

“Now,” said Sir Frederick, “when you paint your picture, remember that the sepoy had sawn away the old bridge at both ends, and the broken timbers lay in the bottom of the ditch. The sappers Home and Salkeld and their men managed to get a long plank across, and it was over this plank they had to carry their powder bags and pile them up against the Gate—they were of course under fire the whole time from the loopholes in the Gate and from the top of the wall.

“When the Gate had been blown in, Captain Crosse led his Company of the 52nd over this plank. We used to have some argument as to whether there was one plank or more, and some fellows used to say that it was impossible that a plank could have borne the weight of several men, and that there must have been a balk of timber and

planks as well, but whatever may have been the case later in the day, I am certain there was only a single plank at the time the Gate was stormed. It so happened that, immediately after the Gate was taken, I was sent down with an urgent message to the party inside ; I legged it down the covered-way and then I was brought up short and had to go across the plank like a rope-dancer. It was a strong thick plank, of course—but there was only one.”

A couple of years or so after this, I was in St. John's Wood working on the picture, which was big, the foreground figures in the bottom of the ditch being fully life-size.

At first I had had some difficulty in regard to the uniform of the 52nd : it was the same mistake as had occurred between the rifle-green and the khaki in the Peiwar Kotal picture, but this time it was the other way round. An authority on uniforms had lent me the complete kit of a bugler of the 52nd as worn at that period, and I had finished a study for the figure of Bugler Hawthorne, when I found out the following facts : a few weeks before the storming of the Kashmir Gate, Nicholson had come down from the Punjab with the Multani cavalry, and on the way down it occurred to some one that they would present a less obvious target to the enemy if they dyed their white uniforms dust-colour. This they proceeded to do in a rough and ready fashion, and this was the genesis of khaki in the Army. The 52nd were the first

British Regiment to follow the example of the Multani cavalry, and thus it came about that they were in khaki when the assault on Delhi took place.

Before the picture was finished, Sir Frederick, who in the meantime had become Lord Roberts, arrived from India and I went off to call on him at his Hotel in Half Moon Street. It was of the first importance to me that he should give me his criticisms before the canvas was further advanced, so I determined to concentrate on getting him to fix a day for coming to the studio.

It was raining when I arrived at the Hotel. The great little man was there all right, and so was Lady Roberts, who was giving tea to a number of people, some of whom I knew. Conversation was lively, and although Lord Roberts asked at once how the picture was getting on, he dashed off to some other subject before I could get him to name a day for his visit. It seemed impossible to get an appointment fixed, for some other subject always distracted him at the wrong moment. At last I said, "I must be off, but before I go I should like very much to know what day you will come and see the picture." "Well," said Lord Roberts, "I am very keen to come. Let me see—— But look here, it's raining. Haven't you got an umbrella?" "No, sir, I haven't got an umbrella. I don't possess an umbrella." "But you *must* have an umbrella in town," said he. "No, I never have an umbrella." He laughed, and then remarked, "The only other man I know who

won't use an umbrella is the Duke of Norfolk, so whenever a shower of rain spoils his hat, he goes and buys a new one. Don't you find hats rather expensive?" "No," I replied, "because I don't wear a top-hat once in a blue moon. I hate top-hats." "I rather like them," said Lord Roberts. "Do they offend your artistic eye?" "Oh, not in the least," I rejoined. "I dislike top-hats because they are so easily damaged. One ought to go about regardless of the weather." "By gad," said he, "I'll tell you what you ought to do, then. You ought to go to your hatter and tell him to make you a top-hat of the stuff a billy-cock hat is made of—then it will stand any amount of rain." "That is a splendid idea!" I cried, "I shall go off this very moment to Mr. Lock and order one—but, can you come to-morrow to the studio?" "No, I can't come to-morrow," said he, "but I will write to you to-morrow fixing a day."

The hat incident had quite a funny *dénouement*. On leaving the Hotel I went along to St. James's Street and ordered a tall hat to be made of the stuff that the hat invented by the famous William Coke is made of. In due time it arrived. It was very tough. You could throw it about and it took no harm, and it was elegant withal. I was very pleased with it, and at the first opportunity put it on and sallied forth into the town. I had not walked a hundred yards when I saw advancing towards me a horrible-looking individual. He was fat and dressy. Above his waistcoat gleamed



a diamond pin. His repulsive face was garnished with an undistinguished beard, but the climax of his vulgarity was his hat—in shape it was a billycock, *but its material was silk such as is used for making a top-hat!* Never in my life had I seen such a thing before. With a shudder I passed on. When I told my wife of the ridiculous person I had met, all she did was to laugh. When at last she found words she gasped, “Well, I think he was no more ridiculous than you. One of you has a top-hat made of billycock stuff, and the other a billycock made of top-hat stuff—one is as silly as the other!”

Lord Roberts soon came to have a look at the picture. He was very pleased with the wreck of the bridge and the single plank on to which the leaders of the storming party were stepping.

“Now,” said he, “you want of course to see as many of the survivors of this incident as possible, so I am going to send you up two fellows who are in my club and who were both in the storming party—Colonel Clive and Captain Crosse, who commanded the leading Company.”

“That would be simply splendid,” I said; “their criticisms will of course be invaluable.”

Lord Roberts did not forget his promise. A day or two after this Colonel Clive was announced, and a little man with courteous manners entered the studio. He was evidently interested in painting, and pleased to see the picture. We discussed the subject and he proved to have a very clear



LORD ROBERTS.

*From the Medallion (Bronze) by Lillian V. Hamilton.*



memory of that day. When I asked him for his opinion of the single plank, he said it struck him as being absolutely correct; he recollected the difficulty he had in crossing it, and in preventing himself from falling into the ditch. We discussed other details, and I hoped that he would be able to point out some error, but he either approved of everything, or was too polite to indulge in criticism. It was only after he had gone that I recollected I had not asked him about the regimental buttons—were they brass, pewter, or khaki? *It was the only detail of the uniform I had not been able to verify.*

Next day Captain Crosse appeared. It would be difficult to imagine two men more different than these brother-officers. Captain Crosse was a very big man with a square white beard. When he came into the studio, he had the expression of a man who had been shoved in against his will, and the few words that he said confirmed the expression.

Now, it is due to the gallant Captain Crosse to say at once that his attitude on this occasion was exceptional. When he came later on to see me in company with Colonel Clive he was in a reasonable and pleasant humour and we got on famously, but on this his first visit he glared for some time at the picture in silence, and then pointed to the figure of Bugler Hawthorne and said:

“We never had a man in the Regiment with a face like that!”

He then fell foul of the plank:

"That's all wrong!" he cried, "There were several planks—beams too, I think; there must have been! How else could we have got the Regiment across?"

"Well," I said, "it is a difficult thing to get at facts, but in this case Colonel Clive and Lord Roberts agree in thinking there was only one plank."

"What! Did Clive say that? Well, I think he's wrong."

"It is a very difficult thing, sir, collecting evidence about an action. For instance, I have come across officers who couldn't tell me what their own kit was on some particular occasion."

"Their own kit!" he roared, "Why, they must have been idiots! I don't understand such a thing! Now, if you were to ask me what kit I wore that day at Delhi, I could tell you everything I had on, down to the last button!"

"Well, I am more than delighted to hear it, sir!" I exclaimed, "What sort of buttons had you?"

The gallant old officer looked inquiringly at me, the anger passed away and a look of surprise took its place; he clutched his forehead and gazed at the ground. There was a large sofa close to where we were standing. He sat down on it and pondered. He twisted one leg over the other. He buried his face in his hands. He writhed. And then suddenly he sat up quite straight and shouted:

"I'm damned if I can remember!"



## XIX

### SHADOW BEFORE

There is a curious mental phenomenon which many people have experienced, and which I have never heard satisfactorily explained.

In its simple form it is this: a man suddenly, for no particular reason, begins to think or talk of some person who has been absent from his thoughts for months; the post arrives, and it brings a letter from that very person. "What a curious coincidence!" is the verdict of anyone who happens to be present and who is informed of the facts.

At first sight such a verdict seems to be the best, for the simple reason that any other verdict would be less probable.

It is true that there are people, some of them of intelligence, who insist that the mind of the writer of the letter has been able to impress itself on the brain of the person to whom the letter is addressed, notwithstanding the material distance which separates the two individuals; but I think there is a strong reason why this should not be the case, for in many of the instances of this phenomenon which have come to my notice, and *in*

of raising my spoon to my mouth, I became aware that if I went instantly to the window I should see Ian in his light suit running across "the gap." I at once dropped my spoon and ran to the southern window.

From the window the avenue was completely hidden by trees except at one spot where there was a gap of some twenty yards in width. This gap could be seen from the window by looking obliquely towards the west-south-west. It was at a distance of about two hundred yards. The moment I got to the window Ian appeared running across the gap exactly with the same movement and speed which I expected—nay, which I *knew* I was going to see. I shouted out, "It's all right! Here he is!" I remember that my elders were startled and scandalized at my abrupt rush from the table, and that my father said, "Nonsense! You've imagined it!" A few moments afterwards we heard Ian's noisy entrance into the hall and he presently entered the room.

No further experiences of this nature happened to me for a number of years, and then one morning, I being in Ceylon and Ian in India, I awoke with a distinct feeling that there was to be a letter from him that day and so it proved. I did not think anything of it, but some weeks afterwards the same thing occurred and I thought it strange.

Ian was a very irregular correspondent, sometimes writing several letters at close intervals, and often letting months pass without writing; but

in spite of the difficulty of gauging the day on which a letter might arrive, I seemed to have developed the habit of knowing with unfailing accuracy whether there was to be a letter from him or not. Generally this came as a mere impression on first awakening, but sometimes I saw the letter as part of a dream.

One day there was a new development; on waking I had a very clear impression of having seen or read a whole letter. I could not indeed have repeated much of the wording, but the general sense remained vividly in my mind. The first part dealt with a conversation he had had with Sir David Barbour about the proposed closing of the Indian mints. This led to a comparison of the wages of coolies and servants in India and Ceylon respectively. The last portion was in lighter vein and was chiefly about the fair sex. There was not a word about shooting or sport in it—which was unusual. In the course of the day his letter arrived, and was practically what I had seen in my dream—or in that moment after sleep before the objective self takes full possession of the senses.

Now, if the similarity between the dream letter and the actual letter were merely a coincidence, the chances against such a coincidence were incalculably great—so great as to force one to look elsewhere for a solution—at least, so I think.

This curious faculty lasted for some months and then ceased. Some time later, when I was in Scotland—I forget the precise year, but it was prob-

ably still in the 'seventies—the faculty returned. Happening one day to meet a distinguished scientist, Professor F——, I gave him an account of the phenomenon.

“ Ah,” said he, “ I think I can account for it. What has happened to you is this : on seeing the real letter, its image passed along the optic nerve and owing to some temporary hitch in the position of the nerves, instead of finding its way into the impression box of your brain, it accidentally got into the memory box ! You therefore *thought* you remembered having seen the letter before. I can assure you that your experience is quite a common one. A man walking along a road will see some birds sitting on a wire and think he has seen them before in those exact surroundings, *although he has never previously walked along that road*, he will then see some curious house or object and think to himself, ‘ This is strange, I *knew* I was going to see that house or object. I must have seen it at some time in a dream ! ’ The explanation is as I have said.”

The scientist's explanation was ingenious, and for a moment plausible, but on consideration I felt convinced that it did not suit my case, as I was sure that the phenomenon had always occurred to me on first awakening, and that I had *expected* the letter some time before it arrived ; however, the question could easily be decided.

Soon after this conversation I was staying at Skene, and one morning I awoke with the know-







STUDY FOR THE STORMING OF THE KASHMIR GATE AT DELHI.

ledge that there would be a letter from Ian. I used to be awakened at Skene by a boy in buttons, and I at once informed him that there would be a letter for me from India on that day. I made a long stay at Skene through the partridge season, the covert shooting, and well into the winter, and during that time several letters arrived from Ian, who some of the time was campaigning beyond the Indian frontier, and on every occasion that a letter arrived I knew of it beforehand, *and had informed the boy in buttons.*

This witness in buttons thus annihilated the Professor's theory.

The intention in recording these recollections is to confine them to the Victorian era, but I shall make an exception here in order to give my last experience of this phenomenon.

After some months at Skene, the foreseeing of the arrival of Ian's letters ceased, and nothing more of the kind happened to me for nearly forty years. On the 12th August 1914 my son sailed to France with the Highland Regiment which my father had commanded and in which my brother had served.

In October of that year I awoke one morning with the old vivid impression that there would be a letter—not from my brother this time—but from my son. Whilst dressing in great excitement, for we had had no news of him for weeks, I made a plan. My son like myself had been at Wellington, and my plan was to array myself in an O.W. tie

as a signal that there was a letter coming from him on that day. I pointed to my tie when I came down to breakfast and explained to my wife and daughters why I had put it on. The expected letter arrived during the day. All through the winter this continued. I never wore the O.W. tie except on the days on which my son's letters had foreshadowed themselves, and on no single occasion could members of my family point out that the invisible messenger, who whispered to me in the night, had been in error.

## XX

### GHOSTS

The premonitions of approaching news, which have been set forth under the heading of "Shadow Before," made a strong impression on my mind, and I bethought me to inquire if a similar experience had ever occurred to other members of our family.

I found out that on one occasion such a premonition had occurred to my brother.<sup>1</sup> He was at a station on the frontier of India in the summer of 1875, when he wrote home asking where I was and if all was well with me as he had a strong and unusual feeling that I was in some danger. It so happened that just at the time he wrote this letter I had met with an accident which was within an ace of proving fatal. I was travelling in Italy, and somehow managed to slip and fall on a knife which penetrated my thigh. When the knife was pulled

<sup>1</sup> Although this was the only occasion on which a premonition of approaching news had occurred to my brother, he had very often experienced the sensation of seeing, or imagining he saw, an individual whom he was actually to meet a few minutes later. The appearance of these wraiths are best described by quoting his letter to me on the subject, which will be found on page 249.

out I saw at once from the way the blood was spurting and the amount of the flow that the femoral artery had been cut. That I did not very soon bleed to death was entirely due to a hint which had been given to me ten or eleven years before ; for, when a small boy at Hafton and strolling in a field with an old gentleman, he had taken it into his head to instruct me how best to improvise a tourniquet in such an emergency. I now followed his instructions and, although there was some difficulty in doing so effectively and a surprising amount of blood was lost before a surgeon could be found, there is no doubt whatever that the old gentleman's graphic illustration of how to apply a rough-and-ready tourniquet saved my life on that occasion.

Even so I was kept in bed for some weeks, and a Court of Inquiry was held in my bedroom by the *Procuratore del Re* and other officials, who made a great fuss over the matter and who, in spite of the evidence of two witnesses and the patient, were obsessed with the idea that a duel or a stabbing affray had taken place. That a punctured thigh should be the result of an accident seemed to them too ludicrously improbable to believe when there was a natural and usual way to account for it !

Apart from this one experience of my brother there were no clear cases of premonition to be found amongst the Hamiltons, but on my mother's side of the family there was at any rate one instance, which I will now relate,



My mother's grandfather was great-grandson, through his mother, to Sir Thomas Prendergast, an officer who had seen a good deal of service under Marlborough and who, in 1708, was in command of a Regiment commonly known as "Prendergast's Regiment." In September of that year he was at home on leave, and part of the time he spent in Ireland and part in London, where also he had a house. Whilst there he made an entry in his pocket-book as follows :

*"Being in bed with my wife last night, in this my house in the City of London, I dreamt that James Cranwell, a native of Clonmell in Ireland, and who died in my service three years ago, appeared in my livery, and told me to prepare for death, for that I would die this day year.*

*"Though having no superstition on the subject I note this as a curious memorandum, if such an event should happen me.*

*"7<sup>ber</sup> 11<sup>th</sup> 1708."*

Precisely a year later, on the 11th September 1709, Sir Thomas was killed by a cannon-ball at Malplaquet, when commanding a Brigade.

At first it was supposed that he died intestate, but subsequently his will, dated 1705, was found and duly proved. His brother Jeffry, his brother-in-law Lord Cadogan, and Colonel James Dawson of Ballinacourty were named as executors, and his papers, including the pocket-book with the "curious memorandum," came into their hands.

I have here given the entry in the pocket-book *verbatim* and the rest of the story, though somewhat condensed, practically as it appears in a MS. written by one of Sir Thomas Prendergast's descendants, namely, my uncle the fourth Viscount Gort, who gave me a copy of it many years ago. He had investigated the evidence in the case with the care and thoroughness which he always gave to matters of family history, and had come to the conclusion that here was a genuine case of premonition. As to my own feelings in regard to the story, I am quite open—nay, inclined—to believe that all this happened as narrated. That his Guardian Angel, or some higher influence, sent a message to Sir Thomas for reasons which are inscrutable to us, and that the spirit of James Cranwell, or his likeness, was chosen to be the messenger, and that Sir Thomas *did* enter it in his pocket-book at the date stated; but I have a vein of scepticism in my nature which prevents me from accepting the story *merely on the evidence of the entry in the pocket-book*. There does not seem to be corroborative proof that Sir Thomas did actually make the entry in September 1708. After his death some months elapsed before the pocket-book was handed to his executors, and it is at least just within the bounds of possibility that some one forged the entry—as a prank—during this delay. Another reason for my scepticism is that the spirits of dead men are notoriously bad at dates as computed by live ones,

If Sir Thomas had been ill and the spirit of James Cranwell had appeared to him and told him that he was going to die on the morrow, and it had happened so—Yes! That I could quite easily believe; but that the late James Cranwell should bear a message to the gallant soldier when he was comfortably in bed with his wife and in good health—a message, too, relating to a matter that was not to occur for a twelvemonth—seems to me such an unusual incident that it should be supported by an unusual amount of evidence. Banquo with his gory locks appeals to me more than Cæsar and the Ides of March.

We were shocking materialists in mid-Victorian days. The vast majority of people took up the attitude that they would only believe in what they could see and understand—as if they could see or understand anything, except perhaps in a slightly less superficial way, than a sheep can see and understand a game of golf. Material comfort, scientific “truth,” and above all the making of money, were obsessions which left no room for what was intangible. People indeed sometimes talked of ghosts, but in a flippant way. They often asked the question, “Do you believe in ghosts?” just as they might ask, “Do you like parsnips?” They did not ask the question for information, but perhaps merely as a preface to a ghost story. They did not only not believe, but they did not believe that any “educated” person could believe in such nonsense, which was only

suitable to the intelligence of some old wife in the Highlands.

When I was a boy, and for many years after, I shared this materialistic point of view. It was not a subject indeed to which I had given more than a passing thought, but I was thoroughly infected with that special ignorance that belongs to civilization, and I never dreamt but that ghosts were as mythical as fairies or wraiths or water-kelpies, or any other of the superstitions of savage minds.

Those who scoffed at superstitions, and particularly at the possibility of a disembodied spirit revisiting this world, found themselves sometimes in a dilemma. In those days people held a firm and literal belief in the Bible, and their belief in the Old Testament was just as complete as in the New. Now, it is there related that Saul went surreptitiously one night to Endor to consult a woman who had a familiar spirit. He succeeded in persuading her to "divine unto" him by the familiar spirit, and to "bring up" Samuel, which she did. We are told Saul did not see him at first and had to ask the woman for a description of what she saw, and it is not specifically stated that he ever did see him, but he "perceived that it was Samuel" and held converse with him, and there is no doubt that according to Holy Writ it is a fact that the spirit of Samuel came to Endor on that occasion, and that he was covered with a mantle,

This passage was a very difficult one for non-believers in ghosts to explain away. They usually took the ground that the spirit of Samuel was not a ghost because he returned to earth for such a short time and under such exceptional circumstances. It is rather a fine distinction. He was a disembodied spirit and he was visible to the woman of Endor, so if he were not a ghost, what was he? I do not see why the length of time taken up by a spirit's sojourn in this world should affect his quality. Years ago, and in the days when I did not "believe in ghosts," I happened to meet the late Frederick Myers, who had much to do with the Society for Psychical Research and who had investigated many haunted houses—real ones and spurious ones; and I remember his telling me that ghosts revisited the glimpses of the moon for much shorter periods than was generally supposed; that even the most pertinacious haunter got tired of haunting after a very few years, and that such a tale in fiction as that of a mediæval ghost clanking its chains at the present day was indeed pure fiction.

It is something of a paradox that in spite of this general non-belief in ghosts people were at times decidedly afraid of them. The stanchest materialist had an eerie sensation when walking alone by moonlight near some old kirkyard; or, if he had to spend the night in a house that was reputed to be haunted, he might laugh and make jokes on the subject by daytime, but he probably



felt less jocular when he had arrived at his quarters for the night and the moment had come for him to blow out the candle. The people who were least affected by such occasional terrors were the people who believed in ghosts, because they knew, amongst other things, that even malignant ghosts were incapable of doing them any harm as long as they refused to let fear invade their minds.

How came it about that the unbelievers were thus sometimes assailed with misgivings in the silent hours of darkness? Beyond doubt because at such moments the workaday self or objective part of their minds was somewhat in abeyance and the subjective was more free to assert itself.

I believe that there are innumerable spirits closely in touch with this material world: not only the spirits which are for the moment inhabiting physical bodies, but disembodied spirits which have certain duties to perform here. I also believe that there are earth-bound spirits which have not yet been refined by repentance or allotted any spiritual duties, and which come probably very near to the popular idea of ghosts, their presence being felt by sensitive people at moments when their objective senses are passive.

And can such spirits ever be seen by the material eye? No, I do not think so. It appears to me to be a confusion of ideas to think that the material eye, whose function is to receive vibrations indicating the colour and form of material objects and to transmit them to the material brain, can

under any circumstances receive impressions from a spiritual object, which is entirely free from its material envelope and, so to speak, on another plane from the physical world.

Certain people have the faculty for seeing ghosts, but it is their deeper or subjective self that sees, and it is through the intermediary of the deeper self that the workaday or objective self is made aware of what they see. The woman of Endor had this faculty, and it was her deeper self that was aware of the bemantled figure of the "old man" who rose beside her. There are still many women of Endor in the world: clairvoyantes with both their senses alert or who, for a deeper plunge into the invisible world, can in a trance abandon their objective self to leave the subjective more unhampered in its quest.

Also there are people without any such faculty, who are usually not aware of their subjective power, but who under certain exceptional conditions accidentally make use of it. To this category belongs my vision of the figure of my brother running across the gap, as narrated in "Shadow Before." I am quite aware that there are people of great honesty and nice judgment who think they have seen a ghost with the material eye or heard a message from the spiritual world with the material ear, but I have a strong conviction that they are mistaken. Either the sight or the sound has come to the subjective self with such force as to deceive them into thinking that their

physical senses have been informed, or the objective self has been *out of gear* at the time without their being aware of it.

If twin brothers should be trying to find treasure in a sunken ship, and one brother should be in a boat and the other should be under water in the wreck and the two should be connected with a signalling line, and if, after a time during which the man in the boat was aware only of his material surroundings, suddenly the diver were to signal that he had found three bars of gold, the man in the boat would visualize three bars of gold, but it would be in his mind's eye. He might see them very distinctly, but his optic nerve or material eye would have nothing to do with it. It is very much in this way that the deeper self immersed in the spiritual element can see a disembodied spirit, and give the information to the workaday self beyond the surface and in touch usually only with material things. The workaday self may receive the impression so vividly that he believes he sees the spirit, but he does not really do so with his material eye—at least, I think not. I should prefer to keep an open mind in considering such a mysterious subject, so I will admit that it is just within the bounds of possibility that the subjective message to the mind may by a form of reflex action act upon the nerves and form an image in the material eye; but even if it were so this would not affect my belief that such vision comes from within, through the intermediary of

the subjective self, and not from without in the usual way.

I have never seen a ghost. It is in another way that I have sometimes been aware of their presence; but I have known people who have seen them, and I shall relate two instances of their experiences.

On the occasion that I met Frederick Myers, being ignorant of ghostly subjects and thoroughly sceptical, and also being aware that Myers was interested in psychical research, I baldly asked him, "What is your best ghost?" Understanding rightly that I meant to ask which of his ghosts was supported by such evidence as would best satisfy the ordinary man, he replied with the business-like air of a John Wellington Wells, "We have several very good ones, but I think on the whole the D—— ghost is the best because it has been seen so many times and by so many people. They were reliable witnesses, and I happen to have personally known one of them, Miss R—— D——, for a long time—since she was a child, in fact—and I am certain that she would be incapable of giving evidence which is not true; but apart from this, her brothers and sisters and other quite trustworthy witnesses have seen it, so it is a case established beyond doubt."

He went on to tell me something about the case, but I only remember a few points. Colonel D—— and his family came to live at a house in the town of C—— in the West Country. In the house

they soon found there was a ghostly resident : a lady who often walked about, both upstairs and downstairs, and always with a demeanour of great sorrow. I think he said that her hands were always held up to her face, but of this I am not sure. He concluded by saying that the appearances of the ghost were now becoming much less frequent, and that in a short time she would vanish altogether. I think he even gave the approximate date at which she would pass away. He spoke with the manner of a doctor diagnosing a rash.

Not long after this talk I was by chance in the town which he had mentioned, and succeeded in finding the haunted house. It was a nice house, with a large garden, and I did not feel that there was anything sinister in its aspect. Some years passed, and one night I went to dine with a young friend in the Horse Artillery. There was another guest, an officer in his Battery whose name was D——. It was an unusual name which at once caught my attention as it was the same name as that of the family who had entertained the sad ghost.

My curiosity was so whetted that, at the risk of starting a subject which might possibly be distasteful to him, I very soon asked him if he were one of the D——s who lived in the haunted house in C——. He replied that he was, and so far from the question annoying him, he spoke eagerly on the subject and gave us a description of the lady, who seems to have very much re-



sembled a live person in appearance, and was indeed at first mistaken for one. There was no particular hour for her visits, which happened sometimes in broad daylight, sometimes in the dusk, and sometimes at night. She was also on occasion to be seen walking in the garden. D—— told us that the first intimation they had of the presence of the ghost was the sound of her footsteps, she being invisible, but later on, when she became visible, no sound accompanied her appearance. He also informed us that if several people were present, only the one who was nearest to the ghost could see it, but if one of the more distant individuals interposed themselves between the spectator and the ghost he or she could then see it, but it vanished to the sight of the person who had originally seen it.

His eldest sister was more absorbed than any other member of the family in studying and making experiments in regard to the ghost. It was she who, when the ghost was beginning to descend the staircase, tied threads across from banister to banister, but they had no effect on the ghost's progress, nor were the threads broken by the passage of the weeping lady. Miss D—— also frequently spoke to the ghost, and asked if she could help in any way, but the spirit paid no attention whatever to her, except possibly on one occasion when she bent her head in an attitude that suggested she was listening.

D—— struck me as a nice intelligent fellow,

who was talking seriously and reasonably. He spoke of the ghostly lady as if it were quite a natural thing to entertain such a visitor. He spoke just as calmly about the movements and behaviour of the ghost as if she had been the Vicar's wife or a cousin from the Colonies.

Having reached this point in writing the story of the D—— ghost, it occurred to me that it would be interesting to see the actual records of the case as preserved by the Society for Psychical Research, so I wrote to them on the subject. Ten days passed without my getting any reply, and I began to think that perhaps they did not answer letters from Tom, Dick, or Harry; but I was mistaken, for on the eleventh day a polite letter came from the Secretary informing me that the Society had been searching their records and had been unable to trace the case of "the haunted house at C—— under the name of D——," either in their Proceedings or Journal or files. So what the Society considered their "best ghost" forty years ago is already forgotten. Evidently ghost-stories as well as ghosts have only a limited existence in this world!

And now for the other story, and for the way in which I came to hear of it. There is an old lady living now in London who ekes out a modest income, derived from her savings, by doing needlework. She is of the type of superior old servant who has served with old families. She was born about the year 1842, and when she was sixteen

years of age she went to France as maid to a lady who was a member of a Royalist family. She was five or six years in France, always in the service of Royalists with names well known in French history, except for a few months in 1862, when she acted as an interpreter at the Exhibition, and so when she returned to England she could speak French with some fluency, and has not yet forgotten it.

I have known this old lady for a number of years, because she used to come to our house occasionally, for perhaps a week at a time, "to do some sewing." I have a great regard for her. She is devout and cheerful—a very good mixture—and she has not got a grumble in her nature.

Discussing her character one day with a woman friend, this friend remarked :

" You know she saw a ghost once—a real ghost ! "

" Oh, did she ? " said I. " I must certainly get her to tell me about it. "

" You won't succeed ! " rejoined my friend. " She never talks about it. Her religion forbids her to believe in ghosts ; and she won't talk about it. "

Next time that Elizabeth came to do some needlework I made a point of having a chat with her, in the course of which I turned the conversation on to the subject of ghosts, and narrated to her with as much eloquence as I could command a no doubt fictitious tale of a probably imaginary friend and his adventure with a ghost. I wound

up by exclaiming, "What a *splendid* experience to have really seen a ghost!" My lure was not cast in vain. After some seconds of silence in which she deftly plied her needle she remarked :

"I once saw a ghost, sir. It was a long time ago."

"No!" I cried, "not really?"

"Yes, sir, I really did," said she.

"And have you only seen one *once*?" I asked.

"Only once, sir."

"Do tell me about it."

"Well, sir, it was in Lancashire——"

"But when was this? How old were you?" I asked, pulling out a notebook.

"It was after I had come back from France, sir. I first went to a place in Ireland for nearly two years, and then returned to England and got a situation as lady's maid with Mrs. B—— at B—— Lodge in Lancashire. It was in the autumn and the weather was very cold. Rather more than a week after I had been there I went to bed one night just as usual, between ten and eleven o'clock. There was a nice bright fire burning in my room. I had not been in bed many minutes and was feeling quite comfortable and happy, and was watching the firelight on the ceiling, when the door opened and some one came into the room. At first I thought it was one of the maids or nurses, but I was very soon aware that it was no one I had ever seen before. I noticed particularly that she had very unusually long hair which came down to her feet,

and that her dress clung to her in a peculiar way. The figure came to the bedside and looked at me for a minute or two with a very strange expression. I knew then quite well what it was, so I remembered what mother had told me and made the sign of the Cross and said my prayers. Next morning when I spoke about it they all said it must have been Mademoiselle, because her hair was so long, they said. Mrs. B—— was very agitated when I told her, and said it was Mademoiselle, and that she must be drowned. She showed me a photograph of Mademoiselle, and then I saw it was the same person. Two days after we had the news that the ship had sunk.”

As Elizabeth’s story was somewhat incomplete, I wrote down a list of questions, some of them rather in the nature of a cross-examination, in hopes that the answers might elucidate certain details. I give questions and answers as recorded at the time :

Q. Who was Mademoiselle ?

A. Mademoiselle had been lady’s maid before I came.

Q. How long was it since she had left ?

A. About a fortnight.

Q. Exactly a fortnight ?

A. Just about a fortnight, sir.

Q. And how long had you been in the house when this happened ?

A. It was rather more than a week ; perhaps ten days, or it might have been a day or two more.



Q. Where was she going to in the ship ?

A. To Hamburg.

Q. How was it she took so long as a fortnight in getting to sea ?

A. What happened was that just after Mademoiselle left to catch the boat there was a very bad storm, and Mrs. B—— was very anxious on her account ; but some days after there was a letter from her saying she had missed the boat and was going by the next one, so Mrs. B—— was very much relieved.

Q. Was Mademoiselle a Frenchwoman ?

A. No, sir—she was a Swiss, or a German—a German, I think, or something like that.

Q. Did your mother suppose there might be ghosts ?

A. Well, perhaps in a way she did—in that respect.

Q. I don't quite understand. Didn't your mother tell you not to believe in ghosts ?

A. Well, mother said we were never to be frightened when people said anything about ghosts. People used sometimes to say to children that if they were being naughty, a boggy or something like that would come and fetch them away ; and it was about that mother said we mustn't believe such nonsense. Some children are so sensitive.

Q. Did you hear any sound ?

A. Only the latch when she opened the door.

Q. Are you quite sure you heard the latch ?

A. Yes, the first I knew of it was when the

latch clicked and the door opened. It was a thumb-latch.

*Q.* How could a spirit open a real door ?

*A.* Well, I don't know about such things, sir. (A pause.) Perhaps she thought she was opening it.

That struck me as a very good answer which suggested a way out of the difficulty. If the ghost went through her accustomed action of opening the door, and if Elizabeth's subjective self were in *rapport* with the ghost, it is not illogical to suppose that her subjective self heard the door being opened. There is no question here of actual vibrations of sound-waves. The whole incident is on another plane. A spiritual entity opens a spiritual door and a spiritual self (attached to an objective self) understands that it is being opened. This it happens to be able, owing to special conditions being present, to communicate to the objective self; and the communication naturally takes the form of the objective self thinking it hears the door being opened. It will be noticed that in both cases here related the ghosts could only be heard when they were *invisible*, and their appearance were never accompanied by *sound*. To continue the record of Elizabeth's cross-examination :

*Q.* Did her dress appear to be wet ?

*A.* Her dress clung to her in a curious way, but I did not notice that it was wet.

*Q.* How did you come to have such a bright fire that night ?

A. Well, Mrs. B—— was very kind about giving us good fires when it was cold, and it was very cold weather at the time.

Q. When you made the sign of the Cross and said a prayer did the figure vanish ?

A. Oh, no, sir ! I closed my eyes to say a prayer and when I opened them she was still there in the same position looking down on me.

Q. Did you feel afraid ?

A. Well, I did feel rather frightened.

Q. With what kind of expression did the ghost look at you ?

A. Oh, very, very sadly.

Q. Did she speak to you ?

A. Her lips were moving. but there was no sound.

Q. How did the ghost vanish ?

A. I closed my eyes and said another prayer, and presently I heard the latch click again and I knew she had gone.

Q. Did you hear the door shut ?

A. Well, I couldn't tell you now, sir, after so many years. I knew quite well she had gone.

Q. And when you opened your eyes she was no longer there ?

A. She was gone.

Q. Have you any doubts at all about the figure being the ghost of Mademoiselle ?

A. Oh no, sir ! None at all.

Q. And why should she have come to you, whom she had never seen before ?

4. I think it was because it was her room, sir, where she had always slept. The poor thing would be puzzled to find herself at the bottom of the sea, and I believe she thought she would try to get back to her own room and her own bed.

---

MY BROTHER'S EXPERIENCES OF WRAITHS <sup>1</sup>

1 Hyde Park Gardens, W.2.

*9th July 1924.*

. . . As to Apparitions, I've never seen, touched, heard, or smelt one of those blokes of the under-world.

No, my dear V., although we had out-of-the-way opportunities as children, when we stayed so long at Pinkie House, it is a disappointment to me to have to confess that not a ghost of an innings have I ever had with the traditional type of bogle. That is not to say I have had no traffic with phantoms. Just a fraction more or less of something in my brain and I should have been cursed with "the sight." As it is, I get perfectly useless and meaningless visions which serve no human purpose beyond giving me a bit of a shiver. You know all about my queer side-slips of the imagination—or whatever else they may be. For forty-two years these Presences out of Place have brought home to me every now and then that this world is not

<sup>1</sup> An extract from the letter referred to on page 229.

quite what it seems to be to an average mortal like myself. To spin you any long-winded yarns would be tiresome to both of us. What I will do is to put down here the first case and the last. The hundred or so in between are neither here nor there. They have no more bearing on my fate, or in the lives or fortunes of the folk from whom the emanations were projected, than you will find in the specimens I shall proceed to quote you.

In the year 1877 I was sent to Hythe and got my "extra" certificate of proficiency in musketry. After that I went through the Afghan War, where, after my life had been saved by the misfire of a flint-lock, I thoroughly disgraced both Hythe and myself as a marksman. But if I missed the Shin-warri I caught the eye of Bobs—so that was that. Then came the first South African War, where we got the knock at Majuba—another case of bad shooting if ever there was one. You brought the remains of me home. Every one in England was very nice to a young man with his arm in a sling, and, wishing to play up to these good opinions, I renounced a cycle of charming visits in order that I might bury myself at a crammer's, where I began to work feverishly for the next examination at the Staff College. The date was 1882, and I was just beginning to feel the effects of twelve hours a day of sap when, suddenly, there came a cable from Lord Bobs, who had never forgotten the fight in the forest of deodars. He asked me now to be his Aide-de-Camp. In less than no time my books



were burnt and my passage was taken. Wise or unwise the die was cast, and it was to be my fate for the next twenty years to spend any surplus energy I had left after fighting the enemies of my country in fighting for my Chief against the Wolseley Ring. "Too much of this is enough," you surely will cry when you find the tiny crumb of spookism which lies at the bottom of this dish. But remember: the instance is only a sample.

Walking down Piccadilly at 3 p.m., about half-way between the Naval and Military Club and Park Lane, I passed Eyton—I almost brushed his coat. He did not see me. I hesitated, half turned, half thought I would run after him, and then thought, "No, I'll be sure to meet you again," and went on my way. I hadn't gone the length of a cricket pitch towards Hyde Park Corner, when I saw some one dressed just as Eyton had been, and curiously like him too, coming on about twenty paces to the west of me. Naturally, I didn't believe my eyes, and I looked to my front. This was evidently not a real man—merely my imagination. Not a bit of it. He stopped me, shook my hand warmly with an honest flesh-and-blood squeeze, passed me the time of day, said all the old lot at Hythe would rejoice to hear of my good luck in going out to Roberts. I fear he felt me unresponsive. I was indeed dumbfounded; and so on he went up Piccadilly in pursuit of his own shadow.

Could he conceivably have played me a trick?

Could he have run round very fast and met me again? He could not.

Please note that the whole point of my tale is that it has none. Had I seen next morning in the papers that Eyton had broken his neck I should have forgotten the whole affair many a year ago. The world is so full of those *warning* coincidences: they are as cheap, almost, as rubber. But here the queer truth is that nothing happened. We were musketry-school acquaintances—hardly friends; certainly not enemies. Between the summer of '77, when I parted from Eyton after our exam. till the summer of '82, when I met him in Piccadilly, I doubt very much if the thought of him had once crossed my mind. Since then, although I have thought of him thousands of times, I have never seen him or heard of him. He may be alive—I hope so—or he may be dead. I don't know.

Ever since I have been so subject to these uncanny previsions I have given over keeping count of them: very likely they would mount up to seven or eight instances in the year. Never once have I been able to trace any sort of explanation, or indeed any sort of intention, in the premonition—for that, I suppose, is what it pans out at. The only change that has taken place with advancing years is that the gap in time and space between presentiment and his or her presentment has been widened. I am always rather keen to address the wrong fellow, but I never do so, sometimes because I hesitate to take the initiative, sometimes

because I can't—as this my last sample will show.

At the Garden Party the other day, with Betty and Jean, I had a typical instance of my faculty for seeing a sort of wraith of a person I am shortly about to see in the flesh. The man was Lord Dufferin. Although his family were most kind to me in the old days, and although Ava, as you know, was killed whilst acting as my A.D.C. at Waggon Hill, I cannot claim more than a slight acquaintanceship with the present holder of the title, whom I had not seen or, to the best of my belief, thought of for several years. At the Garden Party, however, I saw him right enough. He came from the direction of the Guards Band and passed us at an angle—distance, say, six or seven yards. I pointed him out to Jean and became extremely annoyed with her for not seeing him when I pointed him out. So strangely vexed and excited did I become that I seized her by the wrists and dragged her along after him through all that crowd of petrified highbrows, exclaiming, “There, there, there; don't you see: just in front of you and now turning to the right?” No good at all; she continued to refuse to see him, saying, “What *does* it matter; *do* remember where you are; I *wish* you wouldn't make every one stare.” A few minutes later we left the garden party and made our way towards the motor which we had left at the Achilles statue in Hyde Park. Crossing over to the statue we met Lord Dufferin. I stopped and spoke to him and said, “How extraordinarily quick you've been

in getting out of your kit!" He said, "I don't know what you mean." I said, "I saw you at the Garden Party." He said, "I was not there." Getting into a mortal funk, as I always do on these occasions, and hardly knowing what I was saying, I replied, "Well, then, it must have been Terence or your other brother." He said, "Both my brothers were older than me, and, as you must remember, they are both of them dead."

So there it is!

I don't understand these things: I only know that this is strictly true.

Yours ever,

(Sd.) IAN HAMILTON.

## XXI

### SENSITIVE PLANTS

Although when a boy I shared the materialistic point of view which looked upon Ghosts as merely the fictions of superstition, I yet had some ideas on nature which I do not think were generally held. When I was quite a small boy, perhaps eleven or twelve, the idea came to me that plants had a conscious existence and were capable of feeling pain or pleasure. When in a moment of confidence I confessed this belief to one of the grown-ups it was received with laughter as rather a bad effort of a jocular imagination. My elders rallied me on the subject. They spoke of "hilarious hollyhocks" and "precocious cucumbers"; instead of "pruning" they employed the word "amputation," and as for the decapitation of cabbages, well-simulated sobs accompanied their descriptions of such horrors.

The notion had come to me from reading some book in which were described the lower organisms of life in the sea, and the difficulty of determining whether they should be classified as animals or vegetables. It was pointed out that many forms of plants were more complex and otherwise en-



dowed with attributes which placed them on a higher scale of life than many of the living organisms which were undoubtedly of an animal nature.

Now, I have heard it said that an animal must own some kind of brain and nervous system, but there are vast numbers of animal organisms which possess neither; and, on the other hand, the brain and nerves, *or what takes their place* in plants, may well be there, but not yet understood. It is conceivable, for instance, that a plant can do without nerves, and that what acts as its brain is distributed over certain unsuspected parts of its structure and is capable of receiving direct impressions from its surroundings. If power of movement from one place to another be considered as a differentiation, I would answer that there are forms of plant-life which are rapid travellers—indeed veritable gadabouts—when compared to, say, a barnacle or a winkle. The reproduction of species is another test. Admittedly some plants are bi-sexual, but so are some animals; again, many plants are individually of male or female sex like the bulk of animals. If the vast number of seeds that some plants produce be cited as a concomitant of a low order of life, the question at once occurs, “How about the spawn of the perch or codfish?” It appears to me, therefore, to be all a question of degree, and of adapting means of life and reproduction to environment. If you are going to draw a firm line between sensation and non-sensation, where are you going to draw

it ? I do not believe that Nature draws such lines. She works with infinite variety and modification, but the *plan*, the complete analogy, is always there, although perhaps in an embryonic form too subtle for our eyes or microscopes.

The movements of plants in their struggle for existence may appear to us to be very deliberate when compared with the movements of, say, a mosquito or a wild-cat, but that again is relative and does not affect their motives or their actions. We must adapt ourselves to their slowness. Suppose we were to select a group of trees in a wood as a permanent site for a camera, and suppose it were possible to photograph the sylvan scene every month on a film-roll, and continue the operation twelve times every year for a hundred years and then roll it off on to the screen. What a picture of rapid movement and ruthless fight for existence we should get ! The frantic race for the light ; the greedy stretching to fill the space and to beat down the rival ; the lightning dash of the ivy through the undergrowth and its unerring spring on to the oak tree, who for a few moments remains contemptuous, but is soon writhing away in alarm from the garrotter. Futile gesture ! The ivy throttles and squeezes him with horrible pertinacity, pinioning his limbs as the octopus pinioned Gilliatt. The parasite's bloated stem swells every moment, and look ! its surface simulates the bark of the tree it is destroying. A short tussle, and the poor old oak is at his last gasp, visibly shrinking

and rotting away before our eyes—like Monsieur Valdemar in Poe's gruesome tale. A final clinch and throw, and he crashes down amongst the struggling undergrowth. Young bushes dance about him and, before five seconds have elapsed, fungi are fattening on his corpse.

That—or something like it—is what we should see if we quickened up the actual doings of vegetation.

All animals and plants have, engrained within their consciousness, precisely the same main motives—to *live and to reproduce themselves*. All else is detail. And thus they feed and fight and impregnate; man and beast and bird and fish and reptile and insect and vegetable.

I therefore remain unchanged in the belief of my boyhood. I believe that if animals have a conscious existence it is logical to believe the same of plants. No doubt the consciousness and capability of feeling pain or pleasure became so attenuated in plants and many species of animal life that it may be dim—a vague feeling of discomfort instead of pain; a gentle sense of *bien-être* instead of pleasure—but, still, the sense of consciousness is there.

And if there is a sense of consciousness, is there a spirit? Certainly. I believe that everything that lives has a spirit which is its real self, and that its material appearance is an evanescent manifestation.

It may be objected that I am too narrow-minded, and that if I believe in a spiritual counterpart

to all life I ought to believe also in a spiritual counterpart to all inanimate objects. Well, I am quite inclined to believe that also; but, in spite of Plato and his ideal table, there are great difficulties in the way! Mountains and rocks and rivers may indeed have spiritual counterparts, but I am sceptical as to their consciousness—possibly to represent them in this world is the duty of the Elementals.

## XXII

### THE PEACOCK

A strange fatality overshadowed certain years of my life and that of my wife, and culminated in a tragedy which I shall now record. I do so with some hesitation, but as incorrect versions of what occurred have been related, it is as well that the facts, as far as I remember them, should be stated.

The year 1889 had been spent in India very happily. Apart from being hospitably entertained by friends, and from exploring the beauties of Kashmir, we had put in a good amount of work, and returned laden with studies for pictures and medallions. During the first few years of the 'nineties our prosperity continued, and indeed increased. Some of the pictures actually sold. Dividends rolled in from investments—true, a wealthy man might have considered them trifling, but for our style of life they were ample. An Estate in Ceylon, which I had myself cleared out of the jungle in 1880, began to give good results sooner than I had expected, and in 1890 I bought a large account book in which to enter the crops and other details of the development of the property.

Not only did we find ourselves in a favourable



condition financially, but we were happily surrounded by a coterie of brother-artists—many of whom had been our fellow-students—and after work our life was a festive one.

It was usual to spend our evenings in each other's studios, where supper parties were sometimes arranged, and where famous singers or musicians were often pleased to come and drive us to enthusiasm with finer performances than they ever bestowed on the public—or so it seemed to us. If music were absent, then there would be much talk and tobacco-smoke and enthusiasm and argument and noise.

Of all our brother- and sister-brushes there were none in whose company we were happier, or whom we saw more frequently than two artists, husband and wife, whom, for the purposes of this story, I will call respectively Richard and Esther.

In 1890 we had moved from our house to a larger one; it was at a corner and had a good garden. We spent a lot of money on it and in building an extra studio. We failed to find a purchaser for the other house, which was also in St. John's Wood, but this did not trouble us. We worked on merrily at the new house, and it was here that all our four children were born.

One year we determined to have a real summer holiday—a summer and autumn holiday, in fact—so we rented a shooting in Argyllshire, a property facing the islands of Islay and Jura. There was good shooting of a mixed nature, principally grouse

and blackgame, but there were coverts round the house which held a fair number of pheasants, and caves in the rocks by the sea well filled with pigeons ; there were also good sea boats, lobster pots, and lobsters ready to get into them. The house was nice and big enough to hold a number of guests. We went there towards the end of July and stayed till well on in October. We invited all our best friends and they all came, so we had a full house the whole time.

The success of the actual holiday was even greater than it had been in anticipation. We returned with a new zest to our work in London.

One day a letter arrived from Ian, who was in India, informing us that he was sending home some things and, having no place to store them, was sending them to our address. The " things " were a Buddha in black lacquer, a reclining Buddha in white metal with copper draperies inlaid with rubies, an alligator, and a peacock. The two latter had been shot by him in Nepal.

In due course they arrived. The black Buddha was placed in the hall, the silver Buddha on the drawing-room mantelpiece, and the stuffed creatures in my studio.

The alligator was an awkward guest, but fortunately the studio was large, and we found a place for him where he was not much in the way.

The peacock, on the contrary, was a great ornament and easily placed. There was a gallery running above one end of the studio with a stair-

case descending from it, and we perched him on the rail of the gallery with his tail falling down into the studio. He was a dominating Presence. I think it was before this that an unfortunate thing had occurred. A firm of merchants in Ceylon had got into financial difficulties. It so happened that just before this became known to us they had received two shipments of tea from our new Estate which they had forwarded to London, and also an unusually large quantity of coffee from another Estate in which I had a share. I was completely in ignorance of how such things had come about, or of what the outcome might be, but I did not imagine for one moment that we should be affected financially; the Estates owed the merchants no money, the cargoes had no bills drawn against them, they were our property and free; I therefore felt confident that the cargoes were earmarked as being ours, and that there was no doubt of our eventually receiving their value. I put the matter into the hands of my solicitor, and thought no more about it.

In course of time letters came from my partner, Mills, who was managing the Estate, urgently demanding money as his funds in Ceylon were exhausted. I sent him the money, but had to borrow it. The cargoes which I fondly thought were earmarked had sold well, but after interminable delay I now heard that none, or very little, of the money realized was ever to find its way into my pocket.

A distinct change had thus begun to come over our fortunes, but we were optimists and hoped to put our finances straight by hard work. Very soon an obstacle occurred to hard work, or indeed to any work at all. In midsummer I was suddenly gripped by a peculiarly violent attack of sciatica, the cure of which baffled the good Doctor Bell. After five miserable weeks spent in bed, he sent me off to Droitwich, where after a long stay I only partially recovered.

On returning to work, I soon felt convinced that there was no chance of my getting well in London, and there came to me a craving for the Desert. It was a difficult expedition to arrange in view of the state of our finances, but we arranged it somehow, and early in October ascended the Nile and reached Assouan. After a couple of months, spent chiefly in the Desert, and after many interesting experiences, all traces of the sciatica vanished, and we returned to London.

We were both in good health, and we had brought home a new series of studies, so we had "muckle tae be thankfu' for," but otherwise our fortunes were very different from what they had been a year or two before. My pictures at this period became unsaleable, so I had to sell the greater part of my investments in order to repay borrowed money and loans from the bank, and yet it seemed impossible ever to get clear of the financial blight. We should never have got through the next few years if it had not been that I, fortunately, had a

brother, but it behoves a man to sponge upon even his dearest friend or relative with all the moderation that is possible, and, to tell the truth, our life was not an easy one.

One day L. appeared in the gallery of the studio, and said, "Do you know that moth has got into the peacock?"

"The deuce it has!" I cried. "This must be seen to at once."

In the evening I went round to the High Street, St. John's Wood, where one Cooper, a taxidermist, had a shop.

I knew Cooper well; he had set up several heads for me. Cooper had a long, fair beard, rather tangled, and a peculiar pale eye. There was a great resemblance between him and some of the Kashmiri goats which he used to set up.

I told Cooper what was the matter, and he said, "All right, sir; I'll come round for it after dark. I can't go carrying a thing like that with a long tail by daylight." At night Cooper presented himself and carried off the peacock.

A day or two after this I was working with great keenness, and not wishing to be disturbed, told our maid Eliza that I could see no visitors and that no one was to be admitted on any pretext.

There was a gate to the garden and a path leading to the house. Whilst at work I heard the bell ring and steps approaching the front door; shortly afterwards Eliza entered the studio rather



excitedly, "A didna lat them in," she said, "but a thocht ye'd like to see the caird."

It was Lord Carlisle's card, and under his name he had written in pencil (no doubt chuckling the while), "*and Mr. Thomas Devitt, co-selectors for the New South Wales Art Gallery.*"

Dropping my palette and brushes I bounded up the stairs three at a time, dived through L.'s studio, dodged through the hall, sprinted to the garden gate and was out in the road in time to see the co-selectors still close at hand.

Lord Carlisle, who was one of the most amusing and subtle of *conteurs*, made a good story of this incident. It appears that in spite of Eliza's obstinate refusal to admit him he guessed that his card would bolt me from my hole, but had underestimated the pace at which I would emerge.

They returned with me to the studio, and looked especially at a picture called *An Ambuscade*, a scene from the fighting round Kabul. A few days afterwards we learnt that it was one of the pictures selected for the Sydney Gallery. This was an important sale, for the price represented more than half a year's income, at the reduced rate at which we were living.

This was not our only slice of good luck. Other picture-buyers appeared and did not go away empty-handed. One day Legros called to say that he had shown L.'s medallion of the Rajah of Kapurthala to the Director of the Musée du Luxembourg in Paris, who wished to have it in the permanent

collection of modern Art. This was a great honour, and one which had seldom been conferred on a British artist ; it also led to several more of her medals and plaques finding their way to the Luxembourg.

Lord Roberts used to come occasionally to see us, and one day he announced that he had spoken to some members of the Committee of one of the United Service Clubs about one of my pictures, and that he thought they were eager to acquire it. This was indeed good news. The picture was twenty feet in height and took up much space in the studio ; it seemed almost incredible that our run of good luck was to include the disposal of this picture. The Committee were shortly to come to view it.

I remember that a curious thing happened as Lord Roberts was leaving us that day. I had known for some time by hearsay that he, who was noted as a man of exceptional courage and self-control, disliked cats to such a degree that the presence of a cat in the room completely unnerved him. Now I accepted this tale with a very large grain of salt, for I had not only heard many accounts of his unusual coolness on the battle-field from soldiers who spoke of what they had witnessed, but I had once chanced to see him in face of a startling occurrence which would have made most men jump a yard and which did not have any effect on him at all. It doubtless might be true that he had a strong aversion to cats, but I could not believe

that a man of his remarkable self-possession would betray his feelings if he happened to be in proximity to one of these animals. We had no cats in our house, but some years before this, when we first came to live there, the former tenant of the house informed us that there was a sort of wild-cat which lived in an ivy-covered tree in the garden and was very rarely to be seen. He mentioned that it never came near the house by daylight, and that he had tried to attract it by putting down food, but without success. He had named it Shaitân. It was large and had a very fierce expression. Although we had lived in the house, as I have stated, for some years we had never seen the animal in the open, and had only obtained very occasional glimpses of it in its lair.

When I conducted Lord Roberts to the hall and opened the front door, instead of proceeding across the threshold he emitted a strange sound—something between a groan and a snarl—and stumbled back literally into my arms, saying, “My God, what’s that?” His whole action and the ejaculation were so unlike himself that I felt for a moment I was in the presence of a different man. Crouching outside on the space between the top step and the door and looking up at us with a diabolical expression was Shaitân.

Next morning, on entering the gallery, I saw that the peacock was back in his place. Cooper had brought it in the early morning.

The Club Committee duly arrived and looked

at the picture. As they departed, one of them informed me that the Secretary would write to me about it. When they had gone I embraced my wife and danced the Highland Fling—the picture was as good as sold. Next day the letter from the Secretary arrived. After flattering remarks as to the impression made on the Committee by the picture, he went on to say that, unfortunately, at that moment the funds of the Club were so low that they did not feel justified in buying the picture, but that they would be very glad to hang it if I would lend it to them ! The letter was not exactly what I expected, but I lent them the picture, and some years later presented it to the Club ; they evidently appreciated the gift, and made me an honorary Life Member, at the same time urging me to use the Club as much as I desired and not to regard my membership as merely honorary ; but though all ended pleasantly, that was in the future, and not properly within the limits of this story. At the moment the Secretary's letter was a blow.

Another picture I painted about this time was a scene of the fighting at the Pir Paimal village near Kandahar. I called it *The 92nd at Kandahar*. It was a shocking bit of work and was unfortunately prominently hung on the line at the R.A. I afterwards altered the whole canvas and painted in a number of new figures, and exhibited it again at the R.A., giving it as title *Macpherson's Brigade at Kandahar*. The second attempt was a great

improvement on the first, but still it did not sell.

We were now getting on to the end of the 'nineties. Our prosperity had been lively as long as it lasted, but now financial losses which it is needless to describe overtook us, and we began to consider the question of giving up our house and retiring to some inexpensive place until the storm blew over.

There was another question on my mind—the peacock—I had begun almost to suspect him. It struck me as a curious thing that all our disasters had occurred when he was in the house, and I determined to speak to Ian, who was now in England, about it; after all, it was his bird. When next I met him I gave him a full account of the matter. He at once cried out, “For Heaven’s sake, burn the brute! Or take him in a cab some night to Westminster Bridge and chuck him in the river.”

“No,” I replied, “I won’t do that. Something really *awful* might then happen. But the peacock and the other things are yours. What do you want done with them?”

“Oh, my dear boy,” he replied, “I shall be delighted to have the Buddhas and the alligator back, now that I have a house to put them in, but I wouldn’t have the peacock at any price—for Heaven’s sake make a bonfire in your garden and burn him!”

So the Buddhas and the alligator went to Hythe and the peacock remained on his perch. I do not think I was really superstitious enough to believe





MACPHERSON'S BRIGADE AT KANDAHAR.



in the evil influence of a stuffed bird, but I *did* occasionally examine him to see whether moth had got into him again.

At that time I had taken to painting a good deal from the nude, and there were more nymphs than soldiers on my canvases. I also painted a good many ballet-girls at this period, both in their evening make-up and at their early-morning practice. There was often in the studio a model whom I will call Miss Mansfield ; she was rather a charming young woman, dark with a *nez retroussé*, and a good figure. She lived with two sisters not far from Maida Vale, in a large house which had a garden attached to it. In part of the house a dress-making business was carried on which was run by some ladies of good social position, and Miss Mansfield's elder sister was the manageress. The private part of the house was roomy and well furnished, and adjoined the garden.

Although my model passed as Miss Mansfield, she was in fact married ; her husband was a manufacturer in some Midland town, and for reasons best known to herself she was separated from him and lived with her sisters. They were both considerably older than herself, and although they bore a family likeness to her, they lacked her vivacity and good looks, and indeed had an austere demeanour.

Miss Mansfield often admired the peacock, and when we had decided to leave the house and sell some of the furniture, she implored me to give it to

her, and when I told her that some people thought it an unlucky bird, she laughed and said she liked that kind of unluckiness.

I did not want to give her such a dubious gift, so to put the temptation out of her sight, I went round to the High Street one day to ask Cooper if he would take charge of it, or make any arrangement he liked that would cause its disappearance from my studio. To my consternation, when I got to the shop I found that the shutters were up—pale brown shutters much blistered—and that the whole of the shop-front had a dilapidated appearance. It was evidently unoccupied. I asked for news of Cooper at several of the neighbouring shops, but all I could learn was that he had gone away some time before, and that his present address was unknown. One of the tradesmen said he thought he had removed his business to Camden Town or “somewhere in that direction.” I had a feeling that I would never see Cooper of the tangled beard again.

When Miss Mansfield renewed her entreaties for the peacock I let her have it.

We sold the lease of the house, and a good deal of furniture. We then cast about to find some rooms where we could put our penates and painting materials so as to have a *pied-à-terre* in London. We found the very thing we wanted close at hand in a small and secluded terrace. There was a fairly large front room on the first floor with two windows looking towards the north. This was

to be the studio and living-room. There was a bedroom at the back, and the rent was only ten shillings a week.

We transferred the remainder of our furniture, easels, and canvases into the rooms and departed to Brittany, where we lived for nearly two years in a place by the sea which was far away from the beaten track.

The time came when I had to leave my wife and children and return to London, to do some work which had been commissioned.

The improvised studio at the Terrace was well lighted, as it was not overshadowed by houses, so I was able to work as long as daylight lasted. Mrs. Nash the landlady, who lived in the basement, cooked for me. I am bound to say that her knowledge of cooking was elementary and entirely English. A kipper she could cook to perfection; and an egg, when she secured a good one, she could boil very well; but even the serving up of a chop in an edible form taxed her skill to the utmost. Mrs. Nash was a stern woman, who never had the appearance of enjoying life.

The ground-floor was tenanted by an old lady called Mrs. Scott, who was on amicable, and even intimate, terms with Mrs. Nash. The only outings she ever took from her rooms were down the stairs to the basement.

The floor above me, which was the top floor, was occupied by a Mrs. Fitzgerald and her daughter. Mrs. Fitzgerald was a rather handsome woman,



who dressed well, but in a fashion that was decidedly *outrée*, she also powdered in too visible a manner.

Miss Fitzgerald was of striking aspect. Her features were unusually classical, and her hair, which was wild and rebellious, of a brilliant red. I only had very occasional glimpses of these ladies and had never spoken to either of them, but they both struck me as unusual types of women. Mrs. Nash volunteered the information that they had once moved in "high circles" and that Mrs. Fitzgerald had "kept her own carriage."

There were two visitors who came to see them nearly every day. One of them was known as "the Major." I never inquired what the rest of his name was. He was a tall, thin man with a certain degree of military bearing about him. He always wore a frock-coat, which was of good cut, but very threadbare; its original colour had been black, but the greater part of its surface was now green. Sometimes the neck of a black bottle stuck out from the tail pocket of the coat.

The other visitor Mrs. Nash described as a "great financier from the City." He was very stout; he was indeed, to borrow Leigh Hunt's phrase, "a pleasant climax of obesity"; his waistcoat had the form of a well-grown pear; he had peculiarly small feet, which were always encased in shiny leathern shoes, over which there came white spats; his face was what I should have supposed a financier's face to be, should I have had to suppose a financier's face, and it was ornamented

by a much-waxed moustache with pointed ends. His clothes—unlike the Major's—were always new.

One night when I had finished my repast, and was deep in Hugo's *Les Misérables*, a knock came at the front door, and presently Mrs. Nash appeared and informed me that a lady wanted to see me. I at once conjectured it must be Esther, who was one of the few people who knew I was in London, but to my surprise it was Miss Mansfield who was ushered in, and under her arm she carried the peacock. It was more than two years since I had seen her. Things had not gone well with her sisters or herself, the dressmaking business had been a failure, and her sisters either had left their nice house, or would shortly have to.

She talked chiefly about her husband, and told me she had decided to go back to him. She came near to tears when she spoke of saying farewell to the life of the studios, and burying herself in the Midlands. When she had gone I fixed the peacock on the corner of a large picture which was leaning against the wall facing the windows.

During the afternoon of the following day I was at work when I heard some one running very fast down the stairs from the floor above me and there came a violent rat-rat-tat on my door, which opened at the same moment, disclosing Miss Fitzgerald's flaming red head, which was like that of a Medusa.

"Mr. Hamilton! For God's sake come up and help me!" was what she said. It was the first time she had spoken to me. There was no time

for explanations: she ran upstairs and I ran after her.

When we got to the landing we heard a hoarse voice shouting very loudly, "A knife! A knife!" We burst into the room—a bedroom—and for one wild moment I thought I saw a murder being perpetrated before my eyes.

The financier was lying on the floor waistcoat uppermost, the Major was kneeling on him apparently trying to strangle him.

A few moments were sufficient to dispel my first impression: what had happened merely was that the financier had fallen down in a fit and the Major wanted a knife with which to cut away his collar, which with the collar-stud had become embedded in the fat folds of his neck. We soon tore the collar off and loosened his shirt. The Major and Medusa both then turned to me and asked what was to be done next. I knew as little as they did about such a case, but as they seemed to be distracted, I thought an assumption of knowledge would restore their equanimity. At the same instant my eye fell on the financier's ridiculously small feet.

"Take his boots off!" I said.

They tore off his spats and shoes.

"What do we do next?" asked Miss Fitzgerald. I could not think of anything, so I said, "Nothing."

"How about some brandy?" said the Major.

"No," I replied, "you must leave him exactly as he is and go for a doctor."

I returned to the first floor and the Major fetched a doctor. Miss Fitzgerald told me afterwards that the doctor had approved of our treatment, and had not allowed the patient to be moved even on to the bed. How long he remained on the floor I do not know.

Soon after this, I think it was the next day, Mrs. Nash came into my room and closed the door. She stood quite still for a few moments, with a particularly gloomy expression on her face, and then said :

“ I don’t know, sir, what’s come over things in this house. Did you know that Mrs. Scott has had an accident ? Yes, she’s slipped and we’ve had to get the doctor, and he thinks her leg is broke. One thing after another. I think it’s that bird,” and she looked over my shoulder.

“ What *do* you mean, Mrs. Nash ? ” I asked.

“ That bird,” she replied, and pointed straight at the peacock.

“ You don’t really think the bird could have anything to do with Mrs. Scott’s slipping and breaking her leg ? ”

“ Well, sir, they say peacock’s feathers is unlucky.”

“ My dear Mrs. Nash, that is sheer superstition ! Really it is absurd to pay attention to such nonsense.”

“ Well, sir, that’s what we all feel about it, and I would be obliged to you if you would send the bird away.”

"Very well, if you feel so strongly about it, I will make some arrangement, but I really think it is ridiculous."

I had not been feeling well—the reason was evident—I had been overworking and having irregular and hasty meals, and had been taking practically no exercise. Some men who are accustomed to it can do this without penalty, but I had always been used to an out-of-door life, and when in town had formerly fenced every day in the garden and occasionally gone away for a round of golf. I did not sleep at all that night, and in the morning felt so tired and out of sorts that I stayed in bed. During the day I heard the voice of Esther on the stairs talking to Mrs. Nash. Esther came to my door and after expressions of sympathy with my indisposition, which I assured her was nothing, she entered the room and said :

"I *must* speak to you for a minute. What happened to the peacock you used to have ?"

"The peacock is in there," I replied, and indicated the next room.

"Oh ! I am *so* glad," she cried. "I want a peacock so badly for my garden picture. Please lend it to me, I will take great care of it."

"I'm not sure," I said, "everybody seems to think it is an unlucky bird."

"Stuff and nonsense !" said Esther, laughing. "I am not superstitious, I shall gladly accept the risk. *Do* let me have it !"

If I had really believed that the peacock was



capable of exerting a bad influence, I should certainly not have let Esther have it, but at the bottom of my mind I thought (and even now am half inclined to think) that the misfortunes which had several times occurred in houses where the peacock happened to be, were merely coincidences. The end of the conversation was that I gave in, and Esther's gardener was sent to fetch the peacock.

A couple of days afterwards I had a note from Esther saying the peacock was splendid, and was being most useful. She added a postscript to say that it was "such a bother," Richard had been summoned to serve on a jury, and had caught a bad cold in the law courts.

A few days passed, I forget how many, for I was unwell and feverish, when Esther's faithful old servant Annie was shown into the studio. She told me that Richard was very ill indeed, and that Esther had told her to give me the following message: the peacock had been placed on the boundary-wall of the garden under the ilex tree, and Esther would be so much obliged if I would send for it that day after dark.

On my asking if Esther would like to see me, Annie replied that she did not wish to see anyone.

In deep depression I arranged with Annie that I should come that night at ten o'clock.

At that hour I gently rang the bell of the garden gate. The gate was usually opened from inside the house, but on this occasion Annie came down

the path and opened it. When I saw her face I knew what had happened before she spoke. Richard was dead.

We silently went into the garden, and I lifted the peacock off the wall and returned to the gate. And in my mind was the thought, "*What am I to do with the brute?*" The street was very quiet, there was only the sound of one man's footsteps slowly approaching from the direction I was about to take. I waited at the open door until he should pass. As he came into sight it seemed to me that he was Cooper; but the street was feebly lighted and for a moment I thought my imagination must have tricked me. It was impossible that Cooper, who had disappeared years ago, should turn up at such a moment. This must be hallucination.

"You're not Cooper?" I half whispered.

"Yes, sir, I am Cooper," he replied.

"I don't want to see this peacock again—will you take it?" I whispered, as I put it in his arms which seemed ready to receive it.

"Yes, I'll take it. Good night, sir," he murmured and passed on.





